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Abstract approved:

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This study seeks to explore early childhood administrators’ perception of their relational leadership skills and any relationship that may exist between these perceived skills and early childhood administrator characteristics, including teacher turnover experienced. The impact that early childhood leaders have on the organizational climate is significant with studies revealing that teachers who leave do so as a result of low pay (Boyd, 2013; Bloom, 2016), but also due to poor leadership (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Muijs et al., 2004; Young, 2000). With turnover rates more than four times those in elementary education (National Academy of Sciences, 2015), this loss has a negative impact on children’s social and emotional outcomes (Howes, Hamilton, & Philipsen, 1998; Whitebook & Belmm, 1999). For teachers to feel successful in their role, they require administrators who create a climate resulting in positive job satisfaction to decrease turnover (Collie & Shapka, 2012; Van der Vyer et al., 2014) which is inclusive of effective communication and shared decision making (Hale-Jinks et al., 2016; Li et al., 2013). Relational competencies are chosen specifically, as leadership is relational, and the interactions that occur impact each individual within the program and their
satisfaction with administrators and job satisfaction (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Early childhood administrators, most of whom are promoted for their excellent teaching skills (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001), are not required to have specific leadership training that encompasses all of the duties required of a leader in an early childhood setting (Whitebook, 2014), thereby creating a need for this study.

*Keywords*: early childhood, leadership, perceived leadership competency, perceived communication competency
Examining Relational Leadership Skills in Early Childhood Administrators

By

Lisa M. Ranfos

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Plymouth State University, Lamson Learning Commons. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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This dissertation and the years of preceding work would not have been possible without the continued support of my husband, VJ. Thank you for the hours and days of uninterrupted writing time and sacrificing our time together over the last 5 years. Last but certainly not least, thank you to my cohort members, without whom, I would surely have never gotten past that one day I was late for class.
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Doctor of Education: Higher Education

Examining relational leadership skills in early childhood administrators
Lisa M. Ranfos, Plymouth State University
Dissertation Defense: July 27, 2020
Executive Summary: July 27, 2020

Introduction: The purpose of the study was to explore the self-perception of relational leadership and communication competence skills of early childhood administrators. This study also sought to explore relationships between early childhood administrator’s perception of relational leadership and communication skills and administrator characteristics as well as turnover experienced within their programs.

Problem of Practice: The problem of practice is that a lack of focus exists on the preparation and professional development of early childhood administrators, whereas most are promoted due to their excellent teaching skills, but not prepared for the roles of management and leadership.

Research Method: This was a quantitative study that measured perceived relational leadership skills using Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson’s (2008) Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) (Appendix E). Perceived leadership communication competence was measured using Schneider, Maier, Lovrekovic, and Retzbach’s (2015) Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ) (Appendix G). Perceived interpersonal communication competence was measured using Rubin and Martin’s (1994) Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (Appendix F). Participants for the study were 40 early childhood administrators from the state of New Hampshire.

Summary of Findings: Early childhood administrators rate themselves as having some skills in relation to communication competence and relational leadership. Overall, administrators from licensed and licensed plus programs rated themselves higher than administrators from nationally accredited programs on the measures used in this study. Statistically significant differences were reported based on the education level of early childhood administrators, and the type of program in which they worked, finding that early childhood administrators holding a master’s degree ($p = .046$) and employed at nationally accredited programs ($p = .016$) reported higher levels of turnover in their programs within the last 12 months.

Limitation(s) of Study: The study commenced during the COVID-19 pandemic when early childhood programs were closing very quickly across the state impacting the sample size. The study was exploratory in nature and thus cannot be used to determine
causal relationships. The use of self-report instruments are appropriate for self-perception outcomes (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1998), but do not provide as much insight into skills as using self and other reports (Atwater et al., 1998).

**Implications/Significance of Study:** Since early childhood administrator characteristics, including education level and program type were significant to turnover experienced within the last 12 months, future studies should focus specifically on the relationship that administrators have on turnover. Further, as this study provides insight into the self-perception of relational leadership skills held by NH early childhood administrators, future studies should include the use of targeted professional development and self-reflection, as well as other ratings, to better understand how these administrators are perceived by others and how they may develop their own self-perception of skills through professional development.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandchildren, Adaline (Addie) and Easton, who were both born during this incredible journey. They were the ray of sunshine on the darkest of days that allowed me to see the joys within the challenges. While this is a time they surely won’t remember the way I do, I will forever cherish the hours and days that we spent together playing. My hope is that you will understand that there will be hard things in life to face, but there is also happiness and joy simultaneously. Nothing is beyond your reach. You can do anything you set your mind to and I will always be here for you. To my husband and lifelong partner, VJ, you have been there for me through it all. To my boys, VJ, Tyler, and Chase, do not ever think you are too old or not good enough to pursue your dreams. You have the power and determination to accomplish anything.
Examining Relational Leadership Skills in Early Childhood Administrators

Chapter 1

Introduction: Moving From a Problem to a Problem of Practice

Social, Cultural and Historical Perspectives of the Problem

The lack of education and experience required for early childhood administrators and the relation between perceived leadership skills and teacher turnover will be used to examine the research questions being studied. Exploring leadership skills in early childhood administrators may uncover opportunities for professional development to prepare individuals for their roles in leadership, thereby potentially preventing early childhood teacher turnover due to poor work environments.

Early childhood administrators, known as directors in many early childhood programs are responsible for setting the tone toward a productive workplace climate. However, they can be ill-equipped to serve in these roles as the educational and experience requirements can be minimal. As in many leadership roles, individuals tend to grow and develop into them without formal education and training (Popper & Lipshitz, 1993). Additionally, the field of early childhood education has a gap in leadership development opportunities, including training pathways to get there (Douglass, 2018). Supporting administrators through professional development is essential so they may be effective at creating a positive work environment, a factor linked with teacher turnover.

Context of Early Childhood Education Programs

In the United States, sixty-five percent of all children from infancy to six-years-old have their primary caregiver in the workforce, resulting in the likelihood that these
children are in some kind of care option outside the home (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). There are various types of childcare options, ranging from center-based to family care, each with their unique characteristics, costs, and funding streams. Some are proprietary while others are non-profit. These programs are regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services and not through the Department of Education, like K-12 education programs.

Children in early childhood education programs are best served by teachers who understand child development and know how best to support their optimal growth and development (Bloom, 2015; National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009; Stevens, 2017; Zinsser & Curby, 2014). Responsible for caring and educating young children more than ten times the number of hours children spend yearly in public school, early childhood teachers are essential to prepare the youngest generation of citizens for success (Stevens, 2017).

Even with this staggering knowledge, the requirements to be a teacher of young children remain significantly lower than what is recommended (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). There is no standard certification requirement, unlike teachers in public school, even though various organizations have produced reports signifying the importance of equal competencies for all teachers (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015; Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). For example, there are degree programs at the associate and bachelor level in early childhood education, as well as pathway programs such as the Child Development Associate (CDA) to create a pathway to increased education, yet these are not included
as a standard for early childhood professionals (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

This is an area of disparity in early childhood as the requirements to work with children from infancy to kindergarten age vary vastly by state. Educational attainment for early childhood teachers ranges from a high school diploma to advanced degrees (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). Over the past couple of decades, requirements have increased in publicly-funded preschool programs, as well as Head Start programs, due to the increased advocacy and funding from the federal government (Whitebook, 2014). However, individually owned and operated programs remain steady with the lowest number of degreed teachers (Whitebook, 2014).

Adding to the early childhood disparity, individuals tasked with supporting teachers in the early childhood field can be ill-equipped. Educational requirements to lead an early childhood program vary nationally from a high school diploma to a bachelor’s degree (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). Public school principals, the early childhood administrator counterpart, are required to have a license or certification to assume their role through the Department of Education, complete with master’s degree and demonstrated competencies in educational leadership, management, and school culture (NH Employment Security, Economic, and Labor Market Information Bureau, 2019). The lack of knowledge and experience with regard to leadership in the early childhood field overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services is significant as leaders set the tone for a program’s climate (Bloom, 2015; 2016).

The climate of the early childhood workplace, including interpersonal relations, comfort in expressing opinions, and completion of responsibilities (Bloom, 2016), has
been shown to be important to teachers’ job satisfaction and turnover, as well as to child outcomes (Bloom et al., 2010; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Teachers who are more satisfied at work provide better affect and performance in the classroom (Barth, 2002; Bloom et al., 2010; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Public school principals who are rated highly by their teachers were seen to facilitate high organizational climate (Wahlstrom et al., 2010), which is related to higher student test scores (Bloom, 2015). Since administrators impact all children in the school setting, examining the quality of these individuals can have a greater benefit than a single teacher in the classroom, whose impact is predominantly focused on those children in a specific classroom (Branch et al., 2013).

Leadership

A historical understanding of leadership could be defined as one person in power over others (Douglass, 2018; Ford & Seers, 2006) using punishment or rewards to get others to follow directions or meet goals (Bass, 1985). Over time leadership has come to be viewed as the ability to sway another person to do something without using threats (Popper & Lipshitz, 1993). More recently there has been a surge in research examining the motivation of subordinates, with research looking specifically at leaders who set out to increase subordinates’ self-confidence through inspiration instead of through contingent rewards or punishment (Bass, 1985).

Leaders have been characterized by their styles, abilities, and traits (Bass, 1985; Goleman, 1998; Hoffman et al., 2011), as well as by the organizational constructs that affect how leadership is enacted (Hoffman et al., 2011; Popper & Lipshitz, 1993). For several decades, research has sought to determine what characteristics could be taught to create good leaders, including the consideration of task and relational skills (Bass,
What is consistent in the literature trying to uncover effective leadership, is that leaders affect the environment of the program or organization (Argyris, 1973; Barrow, 1977; Senge, 2006; Van der Vyver et al., 2014).

Building on this, current views of relational leadership see the leader as one person in a system, where each member has the power to have leadership qualities and behaviors (Bass, 1985; Ford & Seers, 2006; Hollander, 1992). The shift in leadership away from being driven by a single individual to one that is relational between leaders and subordinates is critical for educational fields, known for their relational contexts (Douglass, 2018; Quick, 2014). Additionally, early childhood has been viewed differently than other organizations in terms of leadership. It is often seen as more collaborative, thereby in need of a leadership style to enhance this view (Douglass, 2018; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Wise & Wright, 2012). Relational leadership theory can be used to examine the process of relationships and their significance to leader effectiveness (Hollander, 1992; Gordon & Yukl, 2004).

**Workplace Climate and Teacher Turnover**

Leaders are responsible for creating the climate of the workplace (Liden & Antonakis, 2009), which has been found to be associated with turnover (Allensworth, 2012; Bloom, 2016; Hur et al., 2016; Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). This finding is significant in educational fields for the importance of the relationships that are built within these organizations (Jorde-Bloom, 1988). Workplace climate, defined as shared perceptions of the workplace environment, including the values, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of each employee within the space (Bloom et al., 2010; Senge, 2006), is critical due to the impact it has on teachers.
Projections report that the need for effective teachers is on the rise and yet turnover is increasing. In fact, nearly one third of early childhood teachers leave the field every year, which is double that of all jobs in the US (Whitebook, 2014). Additionally, turnover for early childhood teachers is four times higher than in elementary school teachers (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

There is a national shortage of early childhood teachers and with low wages, there is high turnover in the field. Turnover results in discontinuity for children. Children experience the loss of their teachers, sometimes several within a short period of time, which negatively impacts children’s social and emotional development (Howes et al., 1998; Whitebook & Belmm, 1999). This is significant, as children who are surrounded by nurturing adults, present in the environment alongside them, have better outcomes (Cumming, 2017; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Zinsser & Curby, 2014). While pay is important to consider, the work environment is also significant and deserves attention (Allensworth, 2012; Bloom, 2016; Hur et al., 2016; Phillips, Howes, & Whitebook, 1991; Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014).

Supportive work environments have been called out as a significant factor in policy recommendations for improving the quality of early childhood education, considered a public good for the benefits high-quality learning experiences exhibit on society as a whole (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). For example, Heckman (2011) purports that investing early on in a child’s educational life prevents the high cost of remediation in the future. However, to ensure these high-quality experiences exist, teachers need to implement best practices and be supported by administrators who understand what this looks like and how to provide environments
that allow teachers to be successful. These administrators, responsible for setting the
tone of the workplace, may or may not have education and experience in the
competencies considered effective at creating a positive workplace climate. These
leaders can, however, be trained in effective relationship-based practice as evidenced by
many targeted training programs (Fleming & Love, 2003; Stamopoulos, 2015). Adding
to this, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards outline
competencies for the preparation and professional development of public school leaders
(Brown et al., 2014), which may be considered for early childhood administrators as
well to keep requirements consistent from early childhood to public school
administrators.

Local Contextual Perspectives on the Problem

In New Hampshire, there are roughly 70,000 children ages zero to five (Karoly,
2017), of which 75% live within homes where all guardians are employed (Whitebook,
McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). Most of these children are likely in some kind of
early care and education program. New Hampshire’s early childhood program
population consists of approximately 834 licensed childcare programs, whether family-
run or center-based, ranging in quality from state-licensed through the Department of
Health and Human Services to nationally accredited through the National Association
for the Education of Young Children (Kalinowski & Kalinowski, 2018).

Leaders of early childhood programs, known by a variety of names, such as
directors, program coordinators, and principals, have minimal requirements to hold this
role in the state of New Hampshire (New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic
and Labor Market Information Bureau, 2017). In the private sector, individuals must be
21 years of age with a high school diploma, have two years' experience with children, and two college courses (one in child development and one in organization and management, which provides an overview of management practices but may not include specific leadership skills). The role of early childhood director is defined as to “direct the activities of child development facilities to provide instruction and care for children. Prepare budgets, authorize purchase of materials, interview and recommend hiring of staff, and other administrative duties” (New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, 2017, para.1). The wealth of knowledge and skills required to implement these duties in comparison to the minimal education and experience appears to leave a gap in preparing early childhood administrators.

In a market rate survey, 17% of programs reported that they were not fully enrolled due to a lack of teachers in classrooms (Kalinowski & Kalinowski, 2018). The general consensus of turnover in the field is that teachers engage in a revolving door of employment in early childhood due to poor wages and poor support in their programs. However, there is a gap in the research in this area as there is no tracking mechanism for turnover in the early childhood field. It is well known that pay is a prime reason for teacher turnover (Bloom, 2016; Boyd, 2013; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Kagan et al., 2002). Further, survey responses indicate that teachers leave to pursue other corporate programs offering better pay and benefits (Kalinowski & Kalinowski, 2018). While true, there could be other reasons that these teachers leave in addition to pay, such as workplace environment and lack of director support. This study seeks to gain additional knowledge of teacher turnover in NH.
Leadership Perspective on the Problem

Many target initiatives focus on teachers as they are directly connected to children’s outcomes (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007). However, this focus misses the opportunity for those in administrative leadership roles to provide supports that could enhance efforts to improve the quality of educational experiences offered to children (Goffin, 2013). As a former teacher of young children and over 20 years of administrative and consulting experience, I have firsthand knowledge that the impact that leaders have on programs continues to be an area of significance that is only indirectly addressed. Various initiatives target improving quality. For example, in New Hampshire, a taskforce has been created to implement a federal initiative related to quality childcare. The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), developed in the 1990s, was created to improve the quality of childcare programs serving the neediest population of children (Workman, 2017). Already implemented in 49 states, QRIS allows states to uniquely address quality improvement through incentives. Professional development for teachers is a focal point of these systems to increase the quality of early childhood classrooms because of the significant impact teachers have on children (Workman, 2017). With these efforts already in motion, as a state, we are primed for the opportunity to create professional development to early childhood administrators to prepare them for their roles within early childhood programs. Currently, however, there is a gap in the research that articulates effective leadership qualities related to early childhood administrators that will be addressed in this study.

Examining the specific area of relational leadership competencies, which focuses on building relationships to support leadership endeavors (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), in
early childhood administrators may uncover targeted areas of professional development to increase the quality for administrators themselves, thereby impacting teachers, and ultimately, children. The way in which professional development is delivered to individuals could also be considered as a follow up to this study. Specifically, in relation to the positive outcomes of reflective practice, coaching, and cohort models, found to be successful in director self-efficacy and level of perceived competence (Talan et al., 2014).

**Specific Problem of Practice**

In NH’s early childhood workforce development process there is a lack of focus on early childhood administrator’s relational leadership competencies. Early childhood administrators have significant influence over programs they lead (Bloom, 1992; Dennis & O’Connor, 2013), including teacher attitudes towards leaving those programs (Bloom, 1988; Jeon & Wells, 2018) and teachers’ ability to feel successfully supported while working with children (Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Dennis & O’Connor, 2013). While current efforts focus on improving children’s outcomes by examining teacher practices, engaging the business community, and calling for an increase in support financially to ensure all NH’s children have a deserved start in early education (Kieschnick & Milliken, 2015; Stevens, 2017), there continues to be a lack of focus on how and if early childhood administrators should be included in quality improvement efforts in NH. Examination of relational leadership competencies could shed light on targeted professional development areas to improve the competency of administrators in early childhood in NH, thereby increasing their ability to effectively lead their programs.
Research questions

1. What relational leadership behaviors do early childhood administrators believe they exhibit?

2. What communication competence behaviors do early childhood administrators believe they exhibit?

3. Is there a relationship between the characteristics of administrators, turnover, and perceived relational behaviors exhibited?
Chapter 2

Review of Knowledge for Action

A focus on early childhood leadership and its importance to program quality has been in existence since a seminal work designed to consider the work attitudes of those within early childhood settings for their significance to program quality (Jorde-Bloom, 1988). At the center of program quality is the early childhood administrator, responsible for creating a climate in which individuals feel fulfilled (Jorde-Bloom, 1988). The majority of the literature on early childhood education leadership generally does not take into consideration the uniqueness of the early childhood administrator’s role and its relational nature with teachers, families, and children. Additionally, early childhood administrators have minimal leadership requirements to attain their roles, which is unique in the educational leadership realm. The literature selected for this review was obtained from Academic Search Premier and includes theoretical sources, as well as peer-reviewed empirical sources. Sources are included that describe the significance of leadership in its relational context, including effective communication, as well as how leaders influence an organization.

Review of Educational Research Literature: Theoretical Sources

Leadership

Leadership has been studied for decades. Current views are built on well-known studies, resulting in the identification of two specific types of behaviors exhibited by effective leaders, task-oriented and relation-oriented (Bass et al., 1975; Bass, 1985; Hoffman et al., 2011). Task-oriented leaders’ primary goal is job completion. They effectively get things done by planning and clearly communicating with others the task
and deadline for completion. Relation-oriented leaders engage in behaviors deemed important to forming relationships, including building trust and being helpful to others (Goethals et al., 2004). Identification of relational orientation has brought forth the shift in leadership from being one of hierarchy and power to an interpersonal one, where the interactions between leaders and subordinates are significant (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

**Relational Leadership**

Social Exchange Theory, developed in the early 1960s, began the extended interest in interpersonal relationships (Homans, 1974). Deeply rooted in behaviorism, Homans sought to articulate that as people interact, their exchanges will ensue as a result of how often there is a repetition of behaviors (1974). Behaviors that are positive will be continued while those that are negative will be avoided (Goethals et al., 2004). Leaders have an expectation of how a follower will respond based on previous interactions which are reciprocated by followers. (Emerson, 1976). If leaders provide support through their acceptance of behaviors, the follower response will remain consistent, reinforcing the patterns created (Emerson, 1976).

Over time, a relationship-oriented style of behavior has become more significant to educators and researchers alike with books and research studies surfacing (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). Relational leadership was founded in Hollander’s model (1992) wherein leaders and followers are seen for their active participation in an organization. Leaders, for their role, may have increased power and influence, but followers are also recognized for the related skills they demonstrate toward organizational effectiveness (Hollander, 1992). Effective leadership cannot exist without understanding the dynamics between leaders and followers (Kouzes &
Posner, 2017). In addition, the importance of followers has led to a shift in research from effective leadership traits to examine followers specifically, seen as critical in more current research (Mahsud et al., 2010).

Relationships between leaders and followers impact follower perception and satisfaction with leaders (Seers & Chopin, 2012). This realization led to Graen’s Vertical Dyad Linkage Model (VDL), inserting that the individual relationships each leader has are significant (Graen & Schiemann, 1978). In this model, individuals earn differing levels of treatment by the leader based on the relationship established, with some getting preferential treatment over others (Goethals et al., 2004).

Graen’s model was further developed into the Leader Member Exchange Theory (LMX), purporting that the relationships that exist between leaders and followers are based on the interplay between them as they form their roles (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Role making is established during formal working tasks that are given by leaders. As followers take on added responsibility or go above and beyond that which was expected, they receive appreciation from leaders, thereby increasing the relationship quality (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). As this process continues, the expectations within the relationship for the leader and follower is formed and solidified. Leaders who consistently recognize the actions of followers who exceed expectations will grow stronger relationships than those who only get the task completed as required (Dansereau et al., 1975). However, if the leader does not recognize the extra efforts of followers, over time, this results in stalled attempts by the follower until the relationship remains strictly formal related to task completion (Dansereau et al., 1975).
LMX theory has evolved further to look outside the formal roles of leader and follower, suggesting that positive relationships throughout the organization matter, not just those concerning the leader and follower. Yammarino and Dansereau’s (2002) model of individualized leadership purports that both the leader and the follower are engaged in the reciprocal relationship through various exchanges. This model suggests that as the behaviors of followers please the leader, the leader in turn responds positively with supports thereby increasing the followers’ feelings of worth and the acknowledgment of the leader (Yammarino and Dansereau, 2002).

Uhl-Bien’s work elaborates on leadership theory to date suggesting that it is in the action within relationships that matters most (2006). In addition, the individual perception one has related to the interaction is personal and constructs each person’s reality, both of the interaction and cumulatively of the relationship over time (Seers & Chopin, 2012). This is significant since relationships matter in organizations because of their significance to the organization itself, and the leader and follower. High-quality relationships are shown to promote increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and decreased turnover (McCallum & O’Connell, 2009). Conversely, low-quality relationships are negatively associated with these same features. High-quality relationships across an organization allow for all members to have the ability to influence change (Goethals et al., 2004).

Relational leadership theory (RLT) builds on the significance of relationships between and within organizations, expanding on historical views examining solely leaders and followers (Uhl-Bien, 2006). In today’s climate, where establishing collaboration and teams to attain organizational goals is the norm, this lens of studying
leadership is timely. RLT takes away the overarching tasks of looking for the most salient qualities in leaders to make them effective and translates importance to the relationships within an organization (Goethals et al., 2004; Seers & Chopin, 2012).

Building on the work of Graen and colleagues’ Leader Member Exchange Theory (LMX), portrayed as seminal in studies examining leadership (Seers & Chopin, 2012), Uhl-Bien signifies this approach as an entity focus since it is embedded in the formal roles of leaders and followers. The effectiveness of the relationship is based on how well the relationships are (or are not) established through interactions over time (Seers & Chopin, 2012). Each interaction reinforces the role in which the individual enacts, leader or follower (Seers & Chopin, 2012). Depending on the context, an individual may be in a leadership role or a follower role. This logic reinforces the current research in examining relationships versus the traits of effective leadership (McCallum & O’Connell, 2009).

In early childhood education, the success of the program depends on the teachers to successfully provide environments and experiences for optimal growth of young children’s development (NAEYC, 2009). This cannot occur unless the program administrator is supportive of the efforts being used (Jorde-Bloom, 1988). These programs are hierarchical in nature, requiring that programs determine an administrator for state licensing and national accreditation requirements. This structure sets the stage for who has the power. However, as high-quality early childhood programs engage children, families, and the community in various ways, these initiatives take the support of all members of the program, creating space for shared power and leadership to flow from director to teacher (Murray & Clark, 2013). In an environment where roles are
significant to job satisfaction (Jorde-Bloom, 1988), it appears a likely environment for studying how these roles may shift and change through the relationships within the program. Examining administrators’ and teachers’ relationships relative to leadership did not unveil any relevant studies in the early childhood literature reviewed. If it is found that competencies exist or could be learned in administrators, there may be an increase in how relational leadership is carried out within the hierarchical structure forced onto the field.

**Leader Impact on Turnover**

Turnover has been researched in various disciplines including business and education with well-established findings that leaders impact turnover (Argyris, 1973; Goethals et al., 2004; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Muijs et al., 2004; Phillips, Howes, & Whitebook, 1991; Young, 2000). Examining positive relationships between leaders and followers in business organizations (Mahsud et al., 2010), found that a positive leader-member exchange was a more significant predictor than was leadership style (Graen et al., 1982). The same is true in early childhood education (Jeon & Wells, 2018), and public education where poor administration continues to be one indicator of turnover, specifically related to relationships (Carlson, 2012; Kraft et al., 2016).

Early childhood education teachers have a tremendous impact on young children’s development and learning (Stevens, 2017; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). In one longitudinal study conducted over four years, it was found that teachers were more likely to remain in their programs when their administrator also remained (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). The impact that administrators have on teacher’s ability to be present
with young children is significant as they set the tone for working conditions in the program (Phillips, Howes, & Whitebook, 1991).

   Wages and benefits are a significant reason teachers leave or stay in their programs (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003), but turnover can be improved when directors are effective in creating an environment where teachers feel connected and seen as a valued member of the program, seeing each for their strengths (Hale-Jinks et al., 2006).

Leader Impact on Workplace Climate

It is well known that leaders affect the environment of the program or organization (Argyris, 1973; Bloom et al., 2010; Veziroglu-Celik & Acar, 2018). Higher-level executives are believed to be necessary for their organizations due to their skill sets including being articulate, competitive, and persuasive as they encourage conformity of subordinates (Argyris, 1973). However, it has been found that they can negatively impact the environment according to their employees (Argyris, 1973). While many factors influence employee perception of workplace climate, the leader is the one who is responsible for creating it (Liden & Antonakis, 2009). Kurt Lewin can be credited with understanding the context in which behaviors occur, now identified as workplace climate (Liden & Antonakis, 2009). Lewin’s view of leadership included the social environment for the impact it has on changing an individual (1944). Viewed originally as what happens between a person and the environment that affects behavior, workplace climate has grown in its definition to include employees’ shared perceptions of the workplace environment, and values, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of each employee within the space (Bloom et al., 2010; Goethals et al., 2004).
In early childhood education, because roles within the organization are more participatory than those in other types of organizations, the environments are critical to the success of teacher retention (Jorde-Bloom, 1988) and children’s developmental outcomes (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Whitebook & Belmm, 1999). The success of an early childhood program is due in large part to the relationships created between all staff members since the environment is intimate. Further, understanding the climate of a program is significant to the leader as a basis for comprehending each individual’s reality and how they fit into the context of the space (Bloom, 2016).

**Communication of Leaders**

Leadership is dependent upon the relationships of those in the organization, which are built through communication (Flauto, 1999) as members express both verbal and nonverbal relational messages (Burgoon & Hale, 1984). Barge and Hirokawa (1989) purport that leadership cannot exist without the ability to communicate, which involves specific communication competencies that allow a leader to encode and decode messages so that others will understand them appropriately. These competencies are dependent on situational factors and the goals being accomplished (Barge & Hirokawa, 1989). Leaders who communicate effectively know what strategies are needed to engage with different personalities they encounter to ensure the message is received accurately (Galanes, 2009).

How leaders effectively communicate is relational (Barge & Hirokawa, 1989). Leaders who use interpersonal competencies, such as being self-aware, and able to manage themselves when relating to others in communication, are viewed as more successful than those who do not (Burgoon & Hale, 1984). As leaders develop the
ability to effectively communicate their messages, the confidence followers have in them increases and in turn, follower satisfaction with communication also increases (Pavitt, 1999).

Clarity of job roles, policies, and procedures has been found to positively impact organizational climate (Madlock, 2008). When people do not understand what they are expected to do, tension and stress can be created, confusion sets in, and relationships are impacted negatively (Bloom et al., 2010). In early childhood education, messages are shared vertically, between the director and staff, as well as horizontally, between staff that may share similar roles (Bloom et al., 2010). This directionality of messages is important in early childhood education because if not given clearly by early childhood administrators they may cause confusion when shared by others. These relational communications could impact leadership and communication competence. Examining the communication skills of early childhood administrators is a current gap in the research literature that this study seeks to address for the significant connection to job satisfaction and teacher turnover (Hale-Jinks et al., 2006).

**Leadership in Early Childhood Education**

Leadership in early childhood education has received limited attention in the last 30 years (Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Li et al., 2013; Pope & Stremmel, 1992; Whitebook, 2014). The discrepancy between public perception of early childhood education teachers and public education teachers is vast, with social recognition of “being a teacher” reserved for those in the K-12 system (Whitebook, 2014). This in turn results in many continuing to believe that a skilled workforce is not necessary to work with young children prior to Kindergarten. However, as research continues to support
the sensitive period of time between birth to five years of age as important for a child’s optimal growth, the support by knowledgeable, trained teachers in the workforce of early childhood become crucial (Hale-Jinks et al., 2007; Hanushek & Rivken, 2007; NAEYC, 2009; Whitebook & Belmm, 1999; Whitebook, 2014).

A plethora of research finds that teachers matter in the education of young children (Howes, 1997; Hur et al., 2016; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; McGinty et al., 2008; Stevens, 2017). What is not given much attention is how early childhood education administrators impact teachers’ ability to be effective with their impact on young children. The diverse roles that early childhood administrators must enact make the position different from those in other organizations (Bloom, 1992). Not only do administrators create the climate for teachers to work within, but they also create a climate where children are nurtured (Bloom, 1992). The competencies of an effective administrator must be clarified for the unique position they hold. This role consists of keeping budgets, communicating with families, staff, and the community, creating curriculum, raising funds, keeping detailed records, and advocating for the best interest of children, to name a few (Bloom, 1992). Additionally, these same roles look different for the ages of children enrolled in early childhood programs. For example, infants require different priorities of these roles than do preschoolers. Responsible for assessing program needs, administrators must have knowledge and expertise in child development to assure children are provided with the necessary curriculum and assessment for optimal development, as well as, an understanding of the diverse nature of families (NAEYC, 2009). Administrators also need to understand the organizational aspects of their work, including hiring and supervising staff. Additionally, administrators must
understand and implement the laws and requirements of operating a program (Bloom, 1992).Yet, frequently, the tasks directors are required to perform are ones in which they are neither educated nor experienced in (Muijs et al., 2004).

State requirements relate directly to the personnel that is hired within early childhood programs (Bloom, 1992). With clear research that supports the need for qualified teachers for optimal impact on children (Howes, 1997; Hur et al., 2016; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; McGinty et al., 2008; Stevens, 2017), state requirements do not translate this knowledge for early childhood in the same way they do in public education (Bloom, 1992; Branch et al., 2013; Whitebook, 2014). Across the nation, states vary dramatically in regulating all areas of childcare programs, including administrator qualifications (Bloom, 1992; Whitebook, 2014). Many early childhood professionals, including administrators, leave programs to go into public school, where their qualifications are awarded higher pay, benefits, and improved working conditions. This results in the field of early childhood losing some of the most talented workforce (Bloom, 1992; Boyd, 2013; Whitebook, 2014). For years, this difference has created a divide between public education (K-12) and early childhood (birth-five years).

The overall need for teachers is forecasted to increase in the next three years. The US Department of Labor predicts a need will increase by 22% for K-12 teachers, 29% for preschool teachers, and 29% for child care teachers (Whitebook, 2014). With the need for more early childhood teachers, new teachers will likely enter the field as untrained professionals. For this reason, administrators must have the training and expertise to provide supports to teachers to decrease turnover and increase the level of competency while on the job (Bloom, 1992; Muijs et al., 2004; Whitebook, 2014).
Review of Educational Research Literature: Empirical Sources

Early Childhood Education Context of Relational Leadership

Traditional views of leadership provide insight into what makes an effective leader but this knowledge does not fully translate well to the early childhood field (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Wise & Wright, 2012). Traditional views see the field of leadership equivalent to that of one individual solely responsible for making decisions, which were generally held by men (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001). However, more recent views of leadership as relational mesh quite well with early childhood, which is recognized as more relational and collaborative (Uhl-Bien, 2006), and most often led by women (Kagan and Hallmark, 2001; Wise & Wright, 2012) who are seen as more collaborative and democratic than men (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

Today’s more current view of leadership where the relationships are viewed for their importance to the success of organizations is more in line with the structure of early childhood education programs. Programs are most successful when each person is viewed as an important part of the system. In essence, each member plays out their roles successfully (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001). In particular, the sharing of leadership roles with others is significant in the field of early childhood, where teachers are more fulfilled when they are involved in decision making and have autonomy in their classrooms (Hur et al., 2016; McGinty et al., 2008).

Zinsser and colleagues (2016) found that directors of early childhood programs believe the climate of an organization is critical but directors are unsure how to provide a positive climate. While this study consisted of a small sample, it is the first study to examine how the emotional or relational side of leadership impacts program quality and
teacher effectiveness. The study has created a new call to action for the importance of professional development for early childhood administrators so they are prepared to positively impact the success of early childhood programs. Zinsser and colleagues posit that just as teachers influence children’s understanding of recognizing and managing emotions, directors can do this for teachers through modeling their own emotions, reacting to staff concerns, and teaching appropriate ways of reacting to emotions (2016). This study, evidenced by the interviews of early childhood administrators, sheds light on the need to examine the administrator’s relationships with teachers within early childhood programs, and how they relate to job satisfaction and turnover (Zinsser, Denham, Curby, & Chazan-Cohen, 2016).

In a field where there has been relatively little research specifically related to leadership (Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, 2018; Muijs et al., 2004), the lack of preparedness required for early childhood leaders, and the historical knowledge related to the importance of leadership, studies examining early childhood leadership are needed as never before. The increase in working families who rely on childcare experiences evidences the growing importance of this work given the impact leaders have on employees and indirectly on children themselves (Whitebook, 2014).

**Teacher Turnover**

Turnover in the business industry has been studied for decades (Rubenstein et al., 2018) due to its negative financial and structural consequences to organizations. In a study of 356 salespeople from manufacturing and service-related fields, it was found that individuals who have a better relationship with their manager also have a higher
commitment to the organization and are less likely to leave (Deconinck, 2011).

Additionally, the study found individuals who had positive relationships with their managers were more likely to engage in open communication related to their performance and needed supports.

In an environment where childcare programs are more a necessity than a choice, the attention paid to the qualifications of employees of these programs is deserved. Regardless of the environment, children from zero to five are constantly learning and developing their brains (Kilburn & Karoly, 2008) and are best served by teachers who understand child development and how best to provide experiences that support their optimal growth (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009; Zinsser & Curby, 2014).

With an ever-growing need for effective teachers nationwide, turnover is a critical factor for consideration. The significance of the number of teachers overall that leave their positions is staggering, with reports showing the turnover rate is double that of all US employment positions (Whitebook, 2014). Scrutinizing the education field solely, the fact that early childhood teachers are four times more likely to leave than their public school counterparts warrants additional attention to this factor (National Academy of Sciences, 2015).

It is well known that in early childhood education specifically, low wages are a primary source of teacher turnover (Bloom, 2016). Boyd (2013) conducted interviews with 32 early childhood teachers and found that while many are satisfied with their professional work with young children, the intrinsic rewards of teaching are not enough and their intention to leave was likely, with nine respondents reporting they would leave
early childhood to move to elementary education where the pay and benefits are better. Bloom (2016) validates this statement with research that indicates pay is an extrinsic factor which translates to value in society about one’s work.

The findings of a 2014 report by Whitebook, Phillips, and Howes yielded more insight into the turnover reality for early childhood programs. The report found that between 11% and 27% of teachers leave yearly, depending on program type. Further, according to a 2018 study conducted by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, 15% of early childhood employees frequently consider quitting their jobs, partly due to negative attitudes in the workplace (Whitebook, McLean, Edwards, & Austin, 2018). In a study by Hur et al., (2016) with 522 preschool teachers, it was found that better job satisfaction was related not only to decreased turnover but also a higher likelihood that teachers would have child-centered beliefs employing more developmentally appropriate teaching practices. Moreover, workplace climate factors, such as collegiality and control over decision making result in an increased sense of job satisfaction, thereby decreasing the intention of leaving.

**Early Childhood Workplace Climate**

The climate of early childhood programs is critical due to the impact it has on teachers (Hur et al., 2016). Leaders have a direct impact on organizational climate, which is highly influenced by the communication used within the program to provide direction, feedback, and praise, all of which are areas related to feeling satisfied at work (Zinsser, Denham, Curby, & Chazen-Cohen, 2016).

The organizational climate in early childhood is created subjectively by each individual and therefore is a result of the roles each person has within the organization.
(Jorde-Bloom, 1988). Even though the roles of employees may differ, the individuals within the space collectively form how the group works together (Bloom et al., 2010). In Jorde-Bloom’s seminal work on workplace climate in early childhood environments, the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey was created (1988). This measure consists of 10 dimensions, including collegiality, professional growth, supervisor support, clarity, reward system, decision-making structure, goal consensus, task orientation, physical environment, and innovativeness. The differences in perception of organizational climate between early childhood directors and teachers are significant, where administrators report a higher level of climate than do teachers in eight of the ten dimensions of organizational climate (Jorde-Bloom, 1988), supporting previous research in other disciplines, including business (Hollander, 1992; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004) and elementary education (Kraft et al., 2016). The role of an organization impacts how one feels.

While traditional organizations have various roles that individuals take on, in early childhood, the director is often the sole person responsible for administration and management of policy and people, internal and external communication, short and long term program planning, and advocacy for the field (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001). Since the 1990s, early childhood leadership research, while minimal, has advocated for a more formal pathway for leaders that includes training and education in preparing individuals for the diverse roles they must be prepared to carry out (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001). Most administrators are well versed in topics related to child development, curriculum planning and implementation, and child assessment, but they are not trained for specific management or leadership skills (Freeman & Brown, 2000). These findings
make sense as most administrators were promoted for their excellent teaching skills. As administrators, they are more comfortable being directly connected with children than carrying out areas designated as managerial (Rodd, 1996). This was demonstrated in a study by Bloom (1997) in which 70% of the 257 directors in the study reported feeling ill-prepared for their work. Similar findings have been reported in Australia (Hayden, 1997) and the UK (Rodd, 1997) where directors feel untrained and ill-prepared for their work as directors. In a study by Rodd (1997), it was found that directors spent more time on tasks centered on managing the program than leading or developing others. In an article by Carter (2000), teachers reported that they wanted their leaders to provide them opportunities for decision making as well as support socially, emotionally, and in the physical environment.

To date, some states have demonstrated success with creating leadership pathways for early childhood directors, but this requires more work (Muijs et al., 2004). During the 1990s and early 2000s pathways were developed and resulted in positive findings related to training early childhood administrators, consisting of specific diplomas (Eisenberg & Rafenello, 1998), learning communities (Mitchell & Serranen, 2000) and training modules (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992). These studies led to an increase in the number of states that recognized the importance of training and education for early childhood administrators. However, only six states require an associate degree for early childhood administrators according to a national report conducted by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (Abel, Talan, & Magrid, 2018). This report assessed administrator qualifications and credentials, principal licensure, and
administrator qualifications in QRIS and in-state Pre-K programs (McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, 2018).

The qualifications to be an early childhood administrator need to be diverse (Abel, Talan, & Magrid, 2018). While the qualities to be effective are equally diverse. Effective leadership in early childhood has yet to be uniformly defined. One study by Ramey and colleagues found that effective administrators are competent, committed, and respected (2000). Early childhood administrators are responsible for many roles. To effectively accomplish all that is required, administrators must be both task-oriented and relationship-oriented in their behaviors, as each is important for effective leadership in other disciplines (Goethals et al., 2004).

**Communication**

Effective communication is essential not only to individuals but to organizations. Effective communication is defined as how clear messages are transmitted to all members of an organization (Li et al., 2013). In a study of 246 manufacturing employees, it was found that when leaders are seen to empower others, specifically in shared decision making, individuals are more likely to be satisfied with their work and more satisfied with the communication used by their leader (Li et al., 2013).

In another study, Odine (2015) found that leaders who are effective communicators have employees who are more trusting and willing to support the program’s efforts, and when staff does not feel communicated with, they are less invested in the workplace (Odine, 2015). Only 17% of the 1,104 employees surveyed from US organizations reported that their managers communicated effectively, even though these managers reported spending 60 to 80 percent of their time on operational communication. Being
directly engaged with another person includes body language, pitch, tone of voice, and facial expression of each participant (Odine, 2015). A successful interaction of communication with others allows the sender to concurrently take stock of the receivers’ interpersonal communication skills as feedback, and to make changes as needed (Odine, 2015).

Interpersonal skills have been identified as a significant predictor of leader effectiveness due to the close connection with understanding human behavior, which is seen as crucial for building positive relationships (Hoffman et al., 2011). In a study by Mast and colleagues (2012), an exploration of interpersonal sensitivity uncovered that when subordinates saw their superiors as relation-oriented, they also saw them as interpersonally sensitive, resulting in a positive relationship with employee job satisfaction. Similar findings were established in a study conducted with over 1,000 educators where leaders who use caring behaviors have followers who are more satisfied with their jobs and more committed to the organization (Van der Vyver et al., 2014).

In combination with the style one uses to communicate, the receiver of the information is also making perceptions of the messages being sent. According to Galanas (2009), the context under which communication occurs is how each individual interprets the messages being sent. Context includes where the interaction is occurring as well as the communication history of the participants. The dialectic tensions at play must be understood by leaders to be effectively managed (Galanas, 2009). Since messages have underlying perceptions associated with them, there are several areas where challenges to communication arise in organizations. These areas include leaders’
feedback about performance, addressing problems in the workplace, and when receiving guidelines from a supervisor (Mikkelson et al., 2017).

Communication is clearly critical to the success of relationships, job satisfaction, and turnover. Several studies have found that when employees are included in decision making, specifically, they are more likely to have a higher assessment of their leader, have better communication, and be more satisfied at work (Collie et al., 2012; Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Hur et al., 2016; McGinty et al., 2008). Participative decision making occurs when leaders provide opportunities informally, outside of the specific hierarchy within the organization (Harrison, 1985). A study conducted by Harrison (1985) suggest that subordinates who are included in decision-making have higher quality communication with their superiors.

**Relational Communication**

In the last 20 years, the communication behaviors of leaders have been examined more closely for their significance to leadership effectiveness and employee satisfaction, well-being, and intention of turnover (Stremmel et al., 1993). Mikkelson et al., (2017) examined relational communication through the direct type of messages that leaders sent, either intimacy messages, involving affection and trust, or dominant messages, involving influence and conversational control. While intimacy messages are akin with personal relationships, working relationships that include messages of care and respect may create a positive work environment during times of disagreement as there is an underlying positive relationship at play (Mikkelson et al., 2017). This study found that relational leaders are more effective when they also use messages of dominance, which include the dimensions of influence, conversational control, poise,
and self-assurance that relay their self-confidence and influence (Mikkelson et al., 2017).

**Significance of Early Childhood Education in New Hampshire**

The discrepancy between public school educators and early childhood educators is stark (Whitebook, 2014; Wise & Wright, 2012). The disproportion of salary, benefits, recognition, qualifications, and work environment are well documented (Abel, Talan, & Magrid, 2018; Whitebook, 2014). With all that is now understood about the importance of the first five years of life, the significance of early childhood yet is not definitive in a shared common language. Early experiences matter for young children, where they are nurtured and supported through interactions by professionals that understand their development and acknowledge the critical role they play in teaching (NAEYC, 2009).

Nationally, state-funded preschool programs for three and four-year-olds are increasing in terms of enrollment, government support, and professional development requirements for teachers (Barnett et al., 2017). However, NH is one of eight states that does not yet provide funding to expand access of public preschool (Karoly, 2017). New Hampshire lags behind most states without any publicly funded programs for children aged three and four, except for children who have identified special needs and those children enrolled in federally funded Head Start. However, these programs only reach a minimal number of children, between 10% – 13% respectively of the population of children in the state (Barnett et al., 2017).

Further, the significance of the early years has yet to make a financial impact in the state at all, even though there is a proven return on this investment (Karoly, 2017). A study completed in 2017 found that many children zero to five face risks in early
childhood due to various factors, including poverty that negatively impacts healthy
development. State programs, such as childcare scholarship funds, designed to support
these children and their families, are underfunded, and cannot reach all eligible children
(Karoly, 2017). Of the 3,600 children in New Hampshire that receive state subsidy for
childcare, 87% of them attended a licensed childcare center. This is a massive number
of children already facing challenges that may impact their development. These
children, perhaps more than others, could benefit from optimal early learning
experiences by educated and experienced teachers in programs where administrators are
also well trained and educated (Vu et al., 2008; Whitebook, 2014). However, in the
current structure of quality rating in New Hampshire, 70% (378) of programs are at the
lowest designation. This designation is determined when programs licensed by the state
meet minimal health and safety standards (Karoly, 2017). This is followed by 19%
(101) that are licensed plus, a solely document review of quality based on eight criteria.
The highest rating of nationally accredited programs is held by only 11% (59) of
programs within the state. While it may seem out of reach to solve the systematic issues
of quality childcare, what can be done is a focused professional development program
that prepares administrators to work in the unique environments of childcare, where
they are prepared for the many roles expected of them on a daily basis (Bloom &
Sheerer, 1992). Building on the already established professional development system
and the existing QRIS, this study is timely in providing state policymakers with
information to equip the professionals in the field with relevant and proven
competencies found to support high-quality early childhood program leadership through
a relational lens.
Current Study

The literature is clear that leadership relationships impact the climate of the workplace (Branch et al., 2013; Douglass, 2018; Flauto, 1999; Ford & Seers, 2006; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Mahsud et al., 2010; Mast, et al., 2012; Mikkelson et al., 2017; Van der Vyver et al, 2014). It is also clear that the communication competence of leaders forms the basis of these relationships. To date, there is a gap in early childhood leadership, specifically in the state of NH. This study seeks to understand the communication competencies of leaders as well as their perception of leadership. Results from this study have the potential to inform administrators as well as state policymakers about identified areas of professional development that are in line with the findings and embedded research connected to the effectiveness of relational leadership.
Chapter 3

Methods and Design for Action

Study Purpose

The proposed research sought to identify characteristics of early childhood administrators to provide targeted professional development in leadership to enhance the quality of early childhood education programs. Self-identified perception of constructs related to relational leadership practices and communication competence drove this study’s efforts in an exploratory quantitative methodological approach. Self-report was chosen as it is one method that allows the research to capture data that would otherwise not be known (Stone et al., 1999). Self-report data allowed the researcher to compare the findings to other data to identify trends and potential connections not known (Stone et al., 1999).

An examination of leadership research has uncovered the significance of relationships as an important consideration (Hollander, 1992; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012), trumping efforts to identify what specific traits are important for leaders to be effective. Instead, leadership effectiveness should reflect the relationship between leaders and followers because they actively engage together in an organization (Hollander, 1992).

NH’s early childhood workforce development lacks a focus on early childhood administrator’s relational leadership competencies, including self-awareness in how they communicate with others. Early childhood administrators are significant for the influence they have over programs they lead (Bloom, 1992; Dennis & O’Connor, 2013), including teacher attitudes towards leaving those programs (Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Jeon &
Wells, 2018) and teachers’ ability to feel successfully supported while working with children (Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Dennis & O’Connor, 2013). While there are efforts to improve children’s outcomes by focusing on teacher practices (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007), there is a lack of focus on the significance of early childhood administrators and how they may be included in quality improvement efforts in NH. Examining specific areas of relational leadership competencies, such as being self-aware, listening to others input, and using feedback from others to make decisions, known for their reliance on building relationships to support leadership endeavors (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), in early childhood administrators may uncover targeted areas of professional development to increase the quality for administrators themselves, thereby potentially impacting teachers, and ultimately, children.

A significant part of leadership is communication. Barge and Hirokawa (1989) purport that leadership cannot exist without the ability to communicate, involving specific communication competencies that allow a leader to encode and decode messages so that others will understand them appropriately. Since leadership is dependent upon the relationships of those in the organization, which are built through communication (Flauto, 1999) it is important to consider how competent early childhood administrators are in communicating with others.

While there have been many studies examining relationships and leadership (DeConinck, 2011, Ford & Seers, 2006; Mahsud et al., 2010; Mast et al., 2012; McCallum & O’Connell, 2009), communication competence (Flauto, 1999; Galanes, 2009; Madlock, 2008; Mikkelson et al., 2017), workplace climate (Collie et al., 2012; Dennis & O’Connor, 2013; Hur et al., 2016; Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Kukla-Acevedo,
2009), and turnover (Cassidy et al., 2011; Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Jeon & Wells, 2018; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003), none have been found to date in the area of early childhood education overlapping these areas. In a field where there are minimal requirements to lead an organization coupled with the knowledge that these individuals impact the quality of workplace climate and teacher turnover, this study investigates administrator’s communication competence as well as their identified leadership for the ability to uncover targeted professional development that could be used statewide in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to improve the entire program’s quality through training the administrators who lead these efforts.

As a result of this study, the state of NH will have the opportunity to examine found self-report characteristics of early childhood administrators and potentially create professional development, catering specifically to these individuals to not only enhance the skills of those already in their role but to prepare new administrators within early childhood programs. Currently, there is a gap in the research in what skills early childhood administrators demonstrate related to leadership that was addressed in this study. These administrators can be trained in relationship-based practice as evidenced by targeted training programs to enhance their self-reported skills in these areas (Fleming & Love, 2003; Stamopoulos, 2015).

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What relational leadership behaviors do early childhood administrators believe they exhibit?

Research Question 2: What communication competence skills do early childhood administrators believe they exhibit?
Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the characteristics of administrators, turnover, and relational behaviors exhibited?

**Study Design**

Embedded in post-positivism, defined in part as the reality of the world based on each person’s perception of it (Creswell, 2014), this study sought to understand the trends of the chosen variables in relational leadership and communication competence within the early childhood administrator to see if there may be potential connections made to future research or experimental study (Creswell, 2014). A quantitative methodology using surveys was selected for this study to explore the self-reports of early childhood administrators in each of the construct variables to address the research questions that were proposed (Creswell, 2014).

An ex post facto, cross-sectional (one-time collection of data) quantitative survey was used to explore if early childhood administrators believe they exhibit relational leadership skills and how competent they feel they are in communicating with others. A quantitative survey was chosen for its frequent use in survey studies and surveys offer a quick response time and are easy to manage tools to collect data (Creswell, 2014). They also describe “trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2014, p. 155). As is typical in surveys, demographic questions, such as age, sex, race, educational level, and years of experience, were included (Salkind, 2010). An additional close-ended question was also added to provide participants with an opportunity to voice their experience related to turnover in early childhood education. While closed-ended questions have a limited option list to choose from, the chosen question related to turnover fits this framework well (Salkind, 2010).
Study Evaluation and Results

The results of this study provide information about ways to target professional development (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, these variables were used to examine if there is a relationship between them and other demographic characteristics of administrators, such as years of experience and level of education. This quantitative method best supported the research questions being explored (Creswell, 2014). The proposed study used already established measurements that have been studied for validity and reliability (Salkind, 2010), as these lead to the meaningful interpretation of data (Creswell, 2014).

Participants and Data Sources

The participants for this study were individuals in an administrative role, referred to as administrators for the purpose of this study, within licensed childcare settings located in the state of New Hampshire. Individuals leading early childhood programs in NH are mostly female, white, and speak mainly English. According to the NH Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of Child Care Licensing (2017), directors must be at least 21 years of age and range in educational completion from high school to advanced study degrees. Years of experience varies between two years of experience (a minimum criterion for the role), to 60 years of experience. There are no known disabilities within this sample. Race and ethnicity for administrators may also vary slightly. Teachers, curriculum coordinators, and other administrative staff will not be included in this study.

A convenience sample of all administrators working in licensed early childhood centers, of which there are roughly 421, were invited to be surveyed. A single-stage
sampling procedure was used from a list of all the program names within the state at one time (Creswell, 2014). Out of the given population, 25%, or 100 directors was the ideal target for the study. While convenience sampling has been labeled as less desirable than random sampling (Creswell, 2014), for the purpose of this study, it was the best way to allow access for a larger sample of the population to take part as the researcher was unable to predict who might choose to participate or not.

**Data Collection and Specific Practices**

The study required collecting data from individuals at one point in time during March 2020 using a general survey of demographic questions and three valid and reliable surveys intended to answer the research questions identified.

**General demographic survey**

This Qualtrics survey consisted of demographic questions related to age, gender, ethnicity, level of education earned, specific training in leadership, years in the field, and the number of years at current program. Program specific questions included the regional location of the program, how many teachers have left the program in the last 12 months, and the reason for leaving (if known).

**Authentic Leadership Questionnaire**

Developed by Walumbwa and colleagues (2008) this measure assesses leader self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. This 16 item self report survey asks leaders to assess how frequently each of the statements included fit with their leadership style, from not at all to frequently, if not always. Sample questions include, “As a leader I, say exactly what I mean”, “As a leader I encourage everyone to speak their mind”, and “as a leader I show I understand
how specific actions impact others”. This tool also has a rater version, but the current study was only concerned with leaders’ self-perception of the scales being used. Cronbach alpha’s were determined to be above the acceptable level in each of the dimensions individually (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Approval for the use of the questionnaire was provided by Mind Garden, Inc. (www.mindgarden.com). The 16-item ALQ was scored based on the following scale: (1) not at all, (2) sometimes, (3) fairly often, and (4) frequently, if not always. The 16 questions that comprise the ALQ were divided into subscales with each containing between three and five questions. The mean of the participant’s total response in each subscale was used for data analysis. The internal consistency, calculated with Cronbach’s alpha for each subscale are as follows: Self-awareness, .92; Relational Transparency, .87; Internalized Moral Perspective, .76; and Balanced Processing, .81.

This authentic leadership questionnaire was chosen for its ability to measure areas related directly to relational leadership, namely self-awareness and relational transparency, identified as important considerations for effective leadership (Fletcher, 2012). In addition, since relational leadership emphasizes the social interactions between leaders and followers, the ability to regulate one’s own emotions and behaviors while balancing core knowledge for effective decision making is critical to being an effective leader in this framework (Fletcher, 2012). This area is captured in the authentic leadership questionnaire in the area of balanced processing, defined as the ability to be objective while examining relevant information to inform decision making that includes views that explicitly challenge their own (Walumbwa et al., 2008)
A review of current measures available unveiled one tool developed specifically for relational leadership (Carifio, 2010). However, the survey did not have a self-report measure, which is what this study was seeking to create a foundation for creating professional development in the field of early childhood, so this measure was not chosen. In addition, there were no studies that could be identified that have used this tool since its inception, whereas the authentic leadership questionnaire has been used in educational studies specifically (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009; Bird, Dunaway, Hancock, & Wang, 2013), using the measure as a self-report and as a self- and other-report.

Other studies have used surveys with varying return rates between 21% and 55% (Ayoko et al., 2008; Flauto, 1999; Schneider et al., 2015). Schneider et al., (2015) received a 21% return rate using a similar method as this study proposed: asking an organization for names of programs and reaching out individually. While their study used paper and pencil surveys, this study used an electronic survey for their ease, and ability to reach across the state without issue (Salkind, 2010). While there are challenges using an online survey, namely that not all people have computers or access to the internet (Salkind, 2010), administrators who completed the survey most likely did so at work, where it is likely a web-based connection was available. Walumbwa et al.’s study (2008) received an 81% return rate with the surveys they used to examine authentic leadership and other leadership types, namely ethical and transformational. In another study examining authentic leadership and follower job satisfaction, an 83% response rate using surveys was attained (Walumbwa et al., 2008). In one study that used the authentic leadership questionnaire in both a self-report for administrators and
teacher rating, the administrators' return rate was 78% while teacher response was only at 30% (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009). It was the hope of the researcher that administrators would have been invested in the results of the study, thereby increasing the likelihood of a high response rate.

**Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS)**

Developed by Rubin and Martin (1994) this measure is the first tool that assesses each construct of interpersonal communication identified by Spitzberg & Cupach (1984). Individuals responded to 30 items designed to reflect their personal style of communication with others. Items are worded in a way that the respondent must select the answer that best matches their personal style in three statements, using a five-point Likert scale: (1) almost always, (2) often, (3) sometimes, (4) seldom, and (5) almost never in each of the ten skills presented (Rubin & Martin, 1994). An example within the skill of self-disclosure, individuals rate themselves on three statements, including, “I allow friends to see who I really am”, “Other people know what I am thinking”, and “I reveal how I feel to others” (Rubin & Martin, 1994). The overall Cronbach alpha for this 30 items scale is .86, which is above the recommended level (O’Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014). Since the measure did not meet sufficient internal reliability analysis, it is not recommended to use subscales of the measure (Rubin & Martin, 1994). Embedded in the relational approach to interpersonal communication, this measure served the current research study well by providing a self-report tool that measures skills of interpersonal communication. Findings from this measure highlight specific areas of professional development for early childhood leaders to be more effective at interpersonal communication in their social settings (Rubin & Martin, 1994).
**Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire**

This instrument measures the leader’s own perceived communication with their staff using a 6-item Likert scale (Schneider et al., 2015). The self-rating version of this measure asks questions such as “I am sensitive to the needs of others”, “I am content with the way my communication with my coworkers is going”, and “My coworkers and I can speak openly with each other” (Schneider et al., 2015). These questions are scored based on the following scale: (0) completely disagree, (1) somewhat disagree, (2) neither agree nor disagree, (3) somewhat agree, and (4) completely agree. Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is .79, which meets an acceptable level (O’Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014). The findings from this tool allowed the researcher to see relationships that existed between the participant’s characteristics and the other measures used.

**Data Collection steps**

1. After receiving IRB approval (Appendix A) from Plymouth State University, a list of programs was collected using the Child Care Licensing Bureau at the Department of Health and Human Services.

2. An electronic cover letter was created to outline the study’s intent as well as to serve as the recruitment tool for the sample (Appendix B). These were sent to all the administrators of the programs identified in NH from licensed center-based programs. Additionally, an informed consent letter was included in the online survey to gain permission from each of the participants to take part in the anonymous study (Appendix C). Included in the letter were links to the Qualtrics survey. Anyone not wanting to take part in the survey was able to click
this option and the survey closed for them, providing a short thank you statement.

Data Analysis and Evaluation

Step 1. A narrative paragraph was used to report the number of responses and non-responses from the sample (Creswell, 2014).

Step 2. To analyze the survey data, descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25 were run to determine the mean, median, variance, and standard deviation of the variables used (Salkind, 2010). This software is useful to see data collected in various ways and organized in an easy to read manner (Salkind, 2010).

Step 3. T-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test for significant differences between the variables (Salkind, 2010) controlling for independent variables such as age, gender, or years of experience. ANOVA is a commonly used statistical test in social science (Salkind, 2010). It is used to find out how each variable contributes to the overall variability (Salkind, 2010). Chi-square, the goodness of fit, were also run to determine the relationships between participant characteristics and turnover experienced.

Step 4. Storage: To help protect the confidentiality of information, all questionnaires were identified with a unique ID number, rather than with the participant’s name, and were stored on Qualtrics, a secure platform, that is password protected. IP addresses were also not collected from the online surveys.

The findings from this study were used to determine what relational leadership skills early childhood administrators perceive they exhibit, using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, and what their perceived level of communication competence is using
the Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire and the Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale. These measures assisted in identifying potential areas that could be examined further to enhance them through professional development in early childhood programs to improve administrator competencies, thereby impacting workplace climate, teacher turnover, and overall program quality.

**Targets and Timeline**

The time frame for the study was intended for two weeks from initially reaching out to the completion of the data collection. In early February, an application to the IRB was submitted for approval. Once approval was received, a list of all early childhood licensed programs in the state of NH was sought out by email to the Bureau Chief of the Child Care Licensing Unit. Upon receiving this list, a Qualtrics survey was created and sent on March 13, 2020, to all program administrators from center-based programs. On March 22, 2020, an email reminder was sent to all programs to increase the return rate of the questionnaires. A final social media announcement on Child Care Aware’s Leadership FaceBook page was used on March 30, 2020, to attempt to increase the response rate of participants.

**Limitations**

Limitations to the study include the researcher’s individual bias in terms of being invested in the study’s success. This is an area of passion for the researcher. The use of self-report surveys was also a limitation as this method asks individuals to rate themselves. Some people may or may not be willing to answer the questions honestly, resulting in inaccurate self-perceptions of the variables being examined (Salkind, 2010). In addition, the use of surveys in this way does not allow for generalizability across the sample (Salkind, 2010). Since this research study was intended as an exploratory
opportunity to identify professional development needs in the areas represented by the variables, the researcher was optimistic that this would not be an issue. Surveys also typically have a low response rate and are only indicative of one perspective (Salkind, 2010). To minimize these limitations this study was designed with follow up emails to remind respondents and was only open for a short amount of time, with the intent of increasing the chances that someone might not put it off until a later date. That the study was specifically looking at one perspective, that of the leader, this limitation was intentionally considered in creating the methodology and the results were highlighted in the study’s findings.

Summary

As an educational leader with a desire to see improvement in the field of early childhood education, this study was well equipped to create a starting place for potential targeted professional development for early childhood administrators, identified as significant for their role in program quality. This research provided an increased understanding of the leadership competencies exhibited by those in the state of New Hampshire that can be shared with state agencies contracted to create professional development and career pathway opportunities. In a field that has minimal requirements, targeted professional development toward proven effective leadership competencies could result in increased quality of early childhood administrators themselves, and benefit teachers and children within the program.
Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Recommended Actions

Early childhood administrators are an important target for research for the impact they have on the programs they lead (Bloom, 1992; Dennis & O’Connor, 2013). Responsible for management and leadership duties, many who come to this role may be ill-equipped, with little to no specific training (New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, 2017; Whitebook, 2014). Program quality is influenced by administrators as they provide support to teachers within their programs (Dennis & O’Connor, 2013). Examination of relational leadership competencies could shed light on specific professional development components to enhance the current skill level of early childhood administrators in NH (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Additionally, examining the demographic data of early childhood administrators may highlight specific characteristics associated with relational leadership skills, enhancing relations between administrators and teachers, thus decreasing turnover (Collie & Shapka, 2012; Jeon & Wells, 2018; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Muijs et al., 2004; Van der Vyer et al., 2014).

This chapter interprets and discusses the results and conclusions of this study and the implications for leadership within early childhood education. The results regarding each of the research questions are presented and the implications of those results are discussed. Future research directions and limitations of this study are also discussed.

The purpose of this study was to identify the perception early childhood administrators have related to their own relational leadership and communication competence skills and to identify the characteristics of early childhood administrators within the state of NH across the various types of licensed center-based programs.
Founded in previous data related to early childhood administrators that most are promoted due to their excellent teaching ability, but not trained for specific management or leadership skills (Freeman & Brown, 2000), this study expected to uncover that those working in higher-quality programs would have higher levels of education, have received more leadership training, and experience less teacher turnover. This study aimed to answer three research questions (1) What relational leadership behaviors do early childhood administrators believe they exhibit? (2) What communication competence behaviors do early childhood administrators believe they exhibit? And (3) Is there a relationship between the characteristics of administrators, turnover, and relational behaviors exhibited?

**Sample Demographics**

This study commenced at the beginning of the COVID-19 global pandemic, March 13, 2020. Early childhood program administrators were faced with many challenges and overwhelmed by the withdrawal of children by families, decisions to close their programs, or remain open to serve emergency personnel, impacting this study’s ability to reach providers. The intent was to reach them in their licensed childcare programs via email, ensuring there would be accessibility as many administrators have office time to respond to electronic messages. This time was devastating to many programs, shifting their priorities to sustaining their programs. As shown in Figure 1, the number of childcare spaces available far exceeded optimal enrollment capacity.
**Figure 1**

*Optimal Childcare Spaces and Actual Enrollment During Spring 2020*


The original request was met with 70 respondents to the survey. An additional electronic invitation was sent on March 22, 2020, as a final attempt at email correspondence, resulting in an additional 16 ($n = 86$) respondents. Lastly, social media was used, via Child Care Aware’s Facebook leadership group on March 30, 2020, with a final request, attempting to provide gratitude for their efforts in the height of a pandemic and to urge them to consider reflecting on their leadership skills via the survey, resulting in an additional 24 ($n = 110$) respondents. Since there was no end in
sight of the pandemic and hundreds of programs had closed their doors, the researcher chose to close the survey on April 19, 2020, and consider the responses that were available to the research questions being asked.

One hundred and ten individuals began the survey, but many but did not complete it before the survey closed on April 19, 2020. Two individuals only completed the first question, related to finding out more about the survey but did not complete any other portion so they were removed. An additional 31 respondents did not enter any data after agreeing to the consent form and were deleted. Nine respondents were not administrators working in a licensed program in NH, so they were removed. Another nine did not complete the question related to their role within the program and three more did not complete the question related to age. Since this could not be verified and including them could skew the data, they were removed. Of the 56 individuals who completed the demographic data completely, 16 did not complete all three measurement surveys within the study and were removed, leaving 40 individuals with usable data for analysis. Frequency counts for the participant demographics used for data analysis are represented in Table 1, using the categories created by the researcher to create specific groups for comparison.
### Table 1

**Participant Demographic Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed/Licensed Plus</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Plus</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, AS, BS</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 40</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 – 60</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years at Current Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 6 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 9 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 15 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 15 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years in ECE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 10 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 15 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 20 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table depicts the demographic information of the early childhood administrator sample collected in this study that was found to have significant analytic relationships.
The sample totaled 40 early childhood administrators in New Hampshire supervising licensed childcare programs. Since the study occurred during a time when all childcare programs in the state of NH were in crisis, the response rate was unexpectedly low. The sample of 40 participants, while lower than intended, allows for examination of the study's research questions because they revolve around self-perception of the behaviors being assessed. Additionally, the sample captured early childhood administrators from nine of the ten counties in the state of New Hampshire as well as each type of licensed program; licensed, licensed plus and accredited.

Gender

The results of the demographic questionnaire of 40 (100%) early childhood administrators being female is consistent with widely held knowledge of gender within this role. Nationally women make up the majority of the early childhood workforce (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018).

Age

The age of the sample, shown in Figure 2, spans a wide range, a majority being between the ages of 41 and 60 years or older (75%). This is indicative of an aging population of early childhood educators within NH.
Figure 2

Age of early childhood administrators from the study

Race

The sample reported 92.5% white, 2.5% black or African American, and 2.5% Hispanic, with one participant choosing not to report their race. This is consistent with racial demographics in the state overall. The field of early childhood is led by mostly Caucasian women, as shown in Figure 3 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). In early childhood programs across the country, the majority of administrators are Caucasian (Abel et al., 2018).
**Figure 3**

*Race of early childhood administrators from the study*

![Pie chart showing race distribution](image)

- **White**: 92%
- **Black or African American**: 2%
- **Hispanic**: 3%
- **No answer**: 3%

**Program Type**

Participants represented each type of licensed program available in New Hampshire as shown in Figure 4. There were 18 licensed programs, determined when programs meet minimal health and safety standards (Karoly, 2017). There were 11 licensed plus programs, a solely document review of quality based on eight criteria and 14 nationally accredited programs, the highest rating of quality recognized, and the least represented in the state. One participant chose not to answer this question.
Study participants were diverse in the size of programs they lead, ranging from administrators of smaller programs serving only 6 children to larger programs with 425 children served. The number of teachers within these programs being supervised by administrators covered a wide range with reports of one teacher to 94 teachers. This demonstrates the variety that exists in the size of early childhood programs in the state of NH.

**County**

Nine of the 10 counties within the state of New Hampshire were represented in the sample of this study as shown in Figure 5. Consistent with the location of programs, areas with more programs tended to see a larger number of responses, representing the southeastern part of the state most significantly (Rockingham and Strafford).
Figure 5
County of Early Childhood Administrators from the Study

Education Level

Early childhood administrators who participated in this study range in education level from some college with no degree ($n = 3$), to associate degree ($n = 1$), to bachelor’s degree ($n = 21$), to holding a Master’s degree ($n = 15$) as shown in Figure 6. Of those with a bachelor’s degree, all but 4 (10%) were focused in early childhood or education specifically. Of those holding a master’s degree, all but one (2.5%) was focused on education or early childhood education. In addition, two (5%) were specific to leadership.
**Pre-service Leadership Training**

Only 5% ($n = 2$) of early childhood administrators had received some specific form of leadership training prior to taking their role as an administrator, with the majority (42.5%) having received both pre-service and in-service training ($n = 17$). Of the 77.5% of administrators who had received some form of training, 67.5% ($n = 27$) reported that a college class was one form of training received.

Participants were asked whether they engaged in some form of leadership training within the last 12 months whether through an online webinar or training, a workshop, a college course, a leadership conference, or a Child Care Aware of NH leadership session as shown in Figure 7. Forty-seven and a half percent ($n = 19$) had engaged in one type of training, 15% ($n = 6$) in two types of training, 15% ($n = 6$) in three types of training, and 7% ($n = 2$) in four types of training. Only 2% ($n = 1$) had engaged in all five types of training.
training, 5% ($n=2$) in four types of training and 2.5% ($n=1$) had engaged in all 5 types of training opportunities offered. Some administrators, 15% ($n=6$) had not attended any leadership training within the last 12 months.

**Figure 7**

*Number of Leadership Training Opportunities Taken Within the Last 12 Months by Early Childhood Administrators*

![Pie chart showing the number of leadership training opportunities taken](image)

**Years in Field of Early Childhood Education**

Close to 60% ($n=24$) of early childhood administrators who participated in the study have been in the field of early childhood education for more than 20 years as shown in Figure 8. The other 40% reported less than 20 years ($n=16$) indicating that
the majority (92.5%) of the respondents are seasoned early childhood professionals with more than 10 years’ experience.

**Figure 8**
*Number of Years in the Field of Early Childhood Administrators from the Study*

*Years at Current Program*

Thirty-five percent (n = 14) of early childhood administrators reported that they have been in their current program for over 15 years as shown in Figure 9. This was followed by 20% (n = 8) who reported 10-15 years, and 45% (n = 18) reported less than 10 years. These figures demonstrate the range of longevity in early childhood administrators serving programs across the state.
Turnover

Over sixty-seven percent \((n = 27)\) of program administrators reported that they had experienced turnover in their program in the last 12 months. The number of teachers who left ranged from one to 15 in some programs. As demonstrated in table 10, twenty seven and a half percent \((n = 11)\) of these teachers left for positions in another childcare program, 25\% \((n = 10)\) left to go into the public school system, 7.5\% \((n = 3)\) left teaching but stayed in education, 10\% \((n = 4)\) retired, 30\% \((n = 12)\) were dismissed unwillingly, and 35.7\% \((n = 15)\) left education all together. Another 7.5\% \((n = 3)\) left for reasons not known by the administrator. This demonstrates there are many reasons why people leave their programs.
Discussion of the Findings

The following sections outline the findings of this study. The results of the statistical analyses are presented, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the data. The following sections answer each of the research questions explored in this study. The impact of these findings on the field of early childhood education and leadership of administrators are also discussed.

To increase the power of statistical analyses run some variables were recoded, such as education level to reflect those having a master’s degree and those without a master’s degree. Program type was also recoded to those that were accredited and those
that were not accredited, due to the small sample size. The number of years administrators had been at their current program was recoded to less than 10 years, and more than 10 years. Age was recoded to 21 to 40, 41 to 60, and over 60 years old.

**Research Question 1: What relational leadership behaviors do early childhood administrators believe they exhibit?**

The ALQ (Walumbwa et al., 2008) was used to determine early childhood administrator’s self-perception of skills related to relational leadership behaviors. The descriptive statistics for the total Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) and ALQ subscales are presented in Table 2. The participant demographic characteristics for early childhood administrators are presented in Table 1. The ALQ measured the four subscales of self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective (moral/ethical) of early childhood administrators in a self-report measure.

**Normality**

Data was analyzed in SPSS for normal distribution, indicating that 99.74% of the values fall within three standards deviations of the mean, resulting in a visual bell curve on a histogram (Ravid, 2015). Table 2 displays the mean, standards deviation, standard error, as well as skewness and kurtosis of responses from early childhood administrators involved in the study on the ALQ measure. Upon examining the skewness (symmetry) and kurtosis (peakedness) of the descriptive statistics, some data represented skewness values that exceed -0.5 or 0.5 (asymmetrical), and kurtosis values that exceeded -1 or +1 (too peaked), which are considered abnormally distributed (Kim, 2013). Upon further inspection using the Shapiro-Wilk’s test ($p = .05$) for its demonstrated power in
testing for normality (Razali & Wah, 2011), findings were significant to each of the following variables as shown in Table 3; ALQ relational transparency, ALQ internalized moral perspective, ALQ balanced processing, and ALQ self-awareness.

After appropriate examination, some of the variables used for analysis were found to be abnormally distributed, which may be the case in smaller sample sizes (Ravid, 2015).

### Table 2

**Descriptive Statistics of the ALQ Mean Score and Subscales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALQ Mean Score</th>
<th>ALQ Transparency</th>
<th>ALQ moral/ethical</th>
<th>ALQ balanced processing</th>
<th>ALQ self-awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.265</td>
<td>3.170</td>
<td>3.456</td>
<td>3.183</td>
<td>3.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.0636</td>
<td>.0827</td>
<td>.0815</td>
<td>.0817</td>
<td>.0724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3.281</td>
<td>3.400</td>
<td>3.500</td>
<td>3.166</td>
<td>3.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.4027</td>
<td>.5234</td>
<td>.5154</td>
<td>.5172</td>
<td>.4581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
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<td>-1.481</td>
<td>-.658</td>
<td>-.532</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Skewness</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.576</td>
<td>3.879</td>
<td>-.506</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>-.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Kurtosis</td>
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<td>.733</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>.733</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range</td>
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<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<td>Minimum</td>
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<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table presents the means, deviations, standard error, skewness, and kurtosis for the overall ALQ measure and each of the subscales for 40 early childhood administrators reporting their self-perception of their skills in authentic leadership behaviors.
Table 3

Shapiro-Wilk’s Test for Normality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALQ RT</td>
<td>.889</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALQ M/E</td>
<td>.884</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALQ BP</td>
<td>.921</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALQ SE</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This table presents the results of the Shapiro Wilk’s test for normality ($p = .05$). ALQRT = Relational Transparency; ALQME = Internalized Moral Perspective; ALQBP = Balanced Processing; ALQSE = Self-Awareness; PLCQ = Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire; ICCS = Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale.

To further explain the distribution of the data, histograms and extreme values were examined using SPSS. The data for ALQ relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing show outliers that are far lower or higher than the rest of the data points. This may be due to inaccurate responses on the surveys, incorrectly using the likert scales. However, if this was the case, there would be consistency across the measures but this does not align with the rest of the data consistently, so is less likely. It is more likely that individuals have a self perception that is low in some areas and high in other areas.

Considering the mean scores of the ALQ subscales, overall early childhood administrators believe they have moderate skills in authentic leadership. Relational transparency, the ability to allow others to see the true self of a leader (Walumbwa et al., 2008) was the lowest scoring area ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .523$) reported by participants.
The subscale of balanced processing, or the ability to consider multiple perspectives objectively to make sound decisions ($M = 3.18, SD = .517$), was also scored lower than others, but the most similar from the participants. This was followed by self-awareness ($M = 3.25, SD = 0.458$), understanding who one is, and how they impact those around them. The highest overall mean score for the ALQ subscales was internalized moral perspective ($M = 3.45, SD = .515$), the ability for people to make decisions associated with their moral values. Participants rated themselves relatively higher than the rest of the subscales in this area. It would seem that early childhood administrators believe they use their own moral guidelines versus those of the organization to make decisions (Walumbwa et al., 2008). In fact, 32.5% (n=13) of participants rated themselves at the top of this Likert scale, as frequently, if not always, when using their own moral values and advocating for others to do the same (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The same finding occurred with principals in a study conducted by Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray (2009) with internalized moral perspective receiving the highest mean score of the subscales ($M = 3.41$). Similarly, each of the subscales indicated similar mean scores for principals self-perception of their authentic leadership skills in the areas of self-awareness ($M = 3.17$), relational transparency ($M = 3.24$), and balanced processing ($M = 3.23$) as the current study indicating that administrators have the self-perception that they do have some skills in authentic leadership. This finding may suggest that early childhood administrators and principals understand the importance of these skills and may be eager to develop them further in themselves.
Research Question 2: What communication competence skills do early childhood administrators believe they exhibit?

Two measures were used to determine early childhood administrator’s self-perception of skills related to communication competence. The Interpersonal Communication Competence Questionnaire (ICCS) (Rubin & Martin, 1994) and the Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ) (Schneider et al., 2015).

Interpersonal Communication Competence Questionnaire (ICCS). The descriptive statistics for the ICCS (Rubin & Martin, 1994) are presented in Table 4. The participant demographic characteristics of early childhood administrators are presented in Table 1. The ICCS, a 30 item scale, measured the self-perception of early childhood administrators in ten dimensions of communication competence (Self-disclosure, Empathy, Social Relaxation, Assertiveness, Interaction management, Altercentrism, Expressiveness, Supportiveness, Immediacy). These dimensions are embedded in the relational approach to communicating with others (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1983). Some of the ICCS questions were negatively worded and required the scoring to be reversed so that all responses would be based on positive responses. The mean of the participants’ total responses was used to analyze the data.
**Table 4**

*Mean Scores of PLCQ and ICCS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PLCQ Mean Score</th>
<th>ICCS Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.2667</td>
<td>3.7843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.08456</td>
<td>.05011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3.3333</td>
<td>3.8000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.53483</td>
<td>.31691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-.499</td>
<td>-.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Skewness</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.313</td>
<td>-.399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Kurtosis</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table presents the means, deviations, standard error, skewness, and kurtosis for total ICCS and PLCQ mean scores for 40 early childhood administrators. PLCQ = Perceived leadership communication questionnaire; ICCS = Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale

Early childhood administrators’ self-perception of their interpersonal communication competence is relatively high ($M = 3.78$) suggesting that they believe they at least sometimes engage in behaviors that are associated with relational skills, which have been proven effective in communication with others. This is promising as other studies have found that communication competence is how leaders achieve their goals when working with others (de Vries et al., 2010; Flauto, 1999).

**Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ).** The PLCQ, a six-item measure was used to assess perceived leadership communication. The mean of the participant’s total responses was used to analyze the data. The descriptive statistics for the PLCQ (Schneider et al., 2015) are presented in Table 4. The participant demographic characteristics of early childhood administrators are presented in Table 1.
Early childhood administrator’s perception of their perceived leadership communication was less than their perceived skill in their interpersonal communication competence ($M = 3.266$). Respondents perceived themselves as having some skill in the area of leadership communication ($M = 3.22$) but not as competent as they perceive themselves in interpersonal communication.

**Correlation Among ALQ, ICCS, and PLCQ Measures**

Pearson’s correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between the ALQ mean, the ICCS mean, and the PLCQ means. As seen in Table 5, all mean scores of the measures are moderately correlated, suggesting that they are measuring similar skills. However, there is enough discrepancy to justify each measure’s use for the uniqueness that each individual measure brings to understanding early childhood administrator’s perception of these skills.

**Table 5**

*Correlations of PLCQ, ICCS, and ALQ (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALQ</th>
<th>PLCQ</th>
<th>ICCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALQ</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLCQ</td>
<td>.532**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICCS</td>
<td>.665**</td>
<td>.490**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). ALQ = Authentic Leadership Questionnaire; PLCQ = Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire; ICCS = Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale.*
Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the characteristics of early childhood administrators, turnover, and perceived relational behaviors exhibited?

Independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were calculated comparing the mean scores of early childhood administrator characteristics and each of the subscales of the ALQ, the ICCS, and the PLCQ.

Program Type

An independent t-test was calculated comparing the mean scores of program type, whether nationally accredited or not accredited, and the ALQ subscales, the PLCQ, and the ICCS, as shown in Table 6. Early childhood administrators working in licensed or licensed plus programs rated themselves significantly higher than those administrators working in nationally accredited programs in the area of ALQ relational transparency. The strength of this difference as noted by the effect size ($ES = .630$) is medium (Ravid, 2015). There were no other significant findings in relation to the ALQ subscales, the PLCQ, or the ICCS and program type.

It is notable that administrators working in nationally accredited programs rated themselves lower than those administrators in non-accredited programs, on each of the measures, except for ALQ self-awareness. This finding suggests that those working in accredited programs may not perceive their skills as favorably as those working in licensed or accredited programs or that administrators in licensed or licensed plus programs see themselves more favorably. While unknown, self-ratings have been found in numerous studies to be inconsistent with other-ratings or seen having an inflated sense of skill level (Atwater et al., 1998; Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Yammarino, & Atwater, 1993). However, as a self-perception method, self-report measures have seen
value previously (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). These self-perceptions can be used as a foundation to enhance these skills in individuals through professional development.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACC</th>
<th>NON-ACC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALQRT</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALQME</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALQBP</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALQSE</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLCQ</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICCS</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.376</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation; ALQRT = relational transparency; ALQME = internalized moral perspective; ALQBP = Balanced Processing; ALQSE = Self-awareness; PLCQ = Perceived leadership communication questionnaire; ICCS = Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale

**ALQ and Other Early Childhood Administrator Characteristics**

Independent t-tests and ANOVAs were calculated to determine if there was a difference between the subscales of the ALQ and early Childhood administrator characteristics. None of the subscales of the ALQ were found to be significant when compared to the administrator’s characteristics, as shown in Table 7. There is no significance between the characteristics of early childhood administrators and how they completed the ALQ.
Table 7

*Difference between ALQ subscales, PLCQ, ICCS, and Administrator Characteristics represented by p values*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALQRT</th>
<th>ALQME</th>
<th>ALQBP</th>
<th>ALQSE</th>
<th>PLCQ</th>
<th>ICCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Years in the Field</em></td>
<td>.866</td>
<td>.460</td>
<td>.870</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td>.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Years in Program</em></td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>.408</td>
<td>.545</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Education Level</em></td>
<td>.560</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>.501</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Age</em></td>
<td>.935</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>.526</td>
<td>.897</td>
<td>.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Turnover</em></td>
<td>.450</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>.497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ALQRT = Relational Transparency; ALQME = Internalized Moral Perspective; ALQBP = Balanced Processing; ALQSE = Self-Awareness; PLCQ = Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire; ICCS = Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale.

**ICCS and Other Early Childhood Administrator Characteristics**

Independent t-tests and ANOVAs were calculated to determine if there was a difference between the ICCS and early childhood administrator characteristics as shown in Table 7. No significant difference was found between the characteristics of early childhood administrators and how they completed the ICCS.

**PLCQ and other early childhood administrator characteristics**

Independent t-tests and ANOVAs were calculated to determine if there was a difference between the PLCQ and early Childhood administrator characteristics as shown in Table 7. No significant difference was found when comparing the mean scores for PLCQ and early childhood administrators’ various characteristics.

**Turnover Experienced**

An independent t-test was calculated comparing the mean score of ALQ relational transparency and turnover experienced within the last 12 months reported by
administrators. There is no significant difference found (t(38) = -.763, p > .05). The same findings occurred when conducting an independent t-test comparing the mean score of ALQ internalized moral perspective and turnover (t(38) = .442, p > .05), ALQ balanced processing and turnover (t(38) = .463, p > .05), and ALQ self-awareness and turnover experienced within the last 12 months reported by administrators (t(38) = .241, p > .05), as shown in Table 7.

An independent t-test was calculated comparing the mean score of the PLCQ and turnover experienced within the last 12 months reported by administrators. There was no significant difference found (t(38) = -1.075, p > .05). The same non-significant finding occurred when comparing the mean score of the ICCS and turnover experienced within the last 12 months reported by administrators (t(38) = -.686, p > .05). The non-significance of these findings suggests that how early childhood administrators assessed themselves on the measures chosen had no relationship with the amount of turnover they had reported over the past 12 months.

**Turnover and administrator characteristics**

Fisher’s exact tests were calculated to determine if there was a relationship between early childhood administrator characteristics and turnover (Frey, 2016). It was hypothesized that accredited programs would have less frequency of turnover than other types of programs. However, more turnover was experienced in accredited programs within the last 12 months as reported by administrators (p < .05), as shown in Table 8. The same significant finding occurred when examining turnover in early childhood programs and the education level of the administrators of these programs. It was hypothesized that there would be higher frequency of turnover in programs run by
administrators with a lower level of education. In contrast to this hypothesis, more
teacher turnover was reported in programs whose administrators had a Master’s degree
(p < .05). This could be an area for future study as many turnover research studies focus
on teacher characteristics and not administrators (Ingersoll, 2001; Saluja, Early, &
Clifford, 2002).

Table 8

Relationship between Turnover Experienced in Last 12 Months and Administrator Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Turnover in Last 12 Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in the Field</strong></td>
<td>.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Program</strong></td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td>.046**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Type</strong></td>
<td>.016**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* **P < .05

A Fisher’s exact test was computed to see if there was a relationship between teacher
turnover and years that administrators have been at their current program. A non-
significant difference was found between teacher turnover experienced in the last 12
months and administrators’ years in their current programs (p > .05). The same non-
significant finding occurred when examining turnover and the number of years
administrators had been in the field of early childhood (p > .05). A one way ANOVA
was conducted to compare the mean scores of turnover experienced within the last 12
months and age of early childhood administrators. It was found that there is no
significant difference \( F(2,37) = .784, p > .05 \). This finding reveals that teacher turnover occurs in all types of programs of quality that are supervised by administrators with varied years of experience. This is in line with other turnover studies that include program type and teacher characteristics, but not specific questions about administrators (Saluja et al., 2002). This is true in K-12 education as well, with national surveys capturing demographics on teachers and administrators demonstrate turnover in all types of schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

**Recommendations and Implications for Educational Leadership for Early Childhood**

**Assessment of Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ)**

The ALQ was found to be an effective tool to assess self-perception of how frequently early childhood administrators demonstrate the behaviors within the subscales of the measure. Since this is the first known study to measure these skills in early childhood administrators, it provides evidence that these skills can be measured and assessed in an easy to complete survey with reliability. Each of the subscales allows for individual consideration in relation to their self-perception of skills.

Relational transparency involves behaviors that promote trust by authentically engaging with others, versus pretending to be someone else. Individuals who are transparent are authentic in their expression of feelings and various thoughts while also controlling these emotions appropriately with others (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Leaders who display this skill are self-aware, able to understand and control their own emotions while controlling their behaviors in socially acceptable ways (Mayer & Caruso, 2002).
Self-awareness is referred to by Walumbwa and colleagues (2008) as to how individuals make sense of the world around them and the impact that has on the way one views themselves. Self-awareness, an important component of emotional intelligence, has been highlighted in leadership research as a critical skill (Mast et al., 2012) that women have been found to demonstrate significantly more than men (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019). The awareness one has about their strengths and weaknesses has been identified as a needed competency for leaders (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Fletcher, 2012; Mayer & Caruso, 2002) that can be developed in targeted professional development (Talan et al., 2014).

Internalized moral perspective refers to the self-regulation of behavior that is grounded in personal moral values. Individuals use these values as a guide in decision making instead of being forced to conform to societal or organizational pressures (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Leaders who demonstrate authenticity in their decisions may have an increased ability to build trust with others through their communication as they are able to provide rationalizations for these decisions (Odine, 2015). Further, skills in this area build on the perception that others have of them related to their ability to make decisions soundly (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Fletcher, 2012).

Balanced processing, the ability to be objective when considering all of the information, particularly those ideas that vary from one’s own, before making a decision, has been identified as important to leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008) and trust in principals (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009). This is significant to leadership as authenticity is credited by others, and not something one can just claim individually (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009). Unlike relational transparency and
internalized moral perspective, early childhood administrator’s perception of balanced processing was similar in their reporting, suggesting that all participants believe they consider other perspectives and data before making decisions in similar ways.

These findings suggest that early childhood administrators believe they have a moderate perception of their skills associated with authentic leadership. Authentic leadership skills have been found to be positively associated with relationships within organizations, particularly through transparent communication (Men & Stacks, 2014). Early childhood administrators would benefit from professional development in areas of self-awareness, transparency, and objectivity to make their authenticity more apparent as it can be nurtured over time. As leaders increase their authenticity through better communication and relationships, they can influence the development of authenticity in followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009). Further, when developed in a group setting, individuals are not only able to work on their interpersonal skills but their inner selves as well (Fusco et al., 2015). Authentic leadership constructs have been found to be a benefit to a positive organizational climate of the program (Pavlovic, 2015). Additionally, as leadership occurs in the communication within the program, these skills are positively aligned with effective communication (Kim et al., 2018; Madlock, 2008; Mast et al., 2012). Examining one’s perception of authentic leadership skills over time through professional development and the use of other-ratings may offer insight into how the perception of skills can be compared with how others view these same skills in leaders. As suggested by Diddams and Chang (2012), self-perception is influenced by cognitive abilities, group dynamics,
and motivation, such as the need to belong, and can be corrected by the use of other assessment tools.

Duplicating this assessment with program administrators may uncover opportunities for professional development that is self-identified and translated to personal goals. In addition, this measure could be used with teachers for the same outcome, thereby creating a pathway of skill development that could be enhanced through coaching. It is recommended that future research consider how using this instrument may predict effective leadership of early childhood administrators through professional development and coaching. Providing an instrument such as this as a tool for self-reflection can provide insight to individuals as they grow as professionals in the field, a targeted outcome that is built into the NH professional development system (Workman, 2017).

There are various training and coaching programs available that could be used with this measure to develop these skills (Talan et al., 2014).

Assessment of Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS)

The ICCS, while a bit long with 30 items, was found to be an effective tool to assess self-perception of how frequently early childhood administrators demonstrate 10 dimensions of communication competence, the ability to manage interpersonal relationships within social settings (Rubin & Martin, 1994). It was chosen as it is founded in the relational approach to communication competence and provides promise that these skills, found to assess appropriate and effective behaviors and skills necessary for goal achievement (Hannawa & Spitzberg, 2015). While individuals in the study believe they demonstrate the ability to select appropriate behaviors to achieve their goals in communication, there is also room to provide professional development to
enhance and advance these skills (Hoffman et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2018; Mast et al., 2012; Rubin & Martin, 1994). No studies were uncovered that have used this measure with early childhood administrators to date. The inability to examine the components as subscales was a barrier to the analyses being conducted. However, this limitation was highlighted by the authors because it addressed multiple dimensions of a construct (Rubin & Martin, 1994). The tools’ value is in what it provides to the outcome of the study’s intent; the professional development opportunities it enhances. As with the ALQ, providing this assessment to program administrators may uncover opportunities for professional development to enhance personal goals toward effective communication in the workplace. Since interpersonal communication competence is necessary for any individual, this measure could be used with teachers as well. The authors suggest a pre and post-test to determine growth over time (Rubin & Martin, 1994). It is recommended that future research consider how using this instrument may predict effective leadership of early childhood administrators through professional development and coaching. Providing an instrument such as this as a tool for skill development allows individuals to see how they progress over time.

Participants from this study overall perceive themselves as sometimes responding and interacting with others in a way identified with effective communication skills. Intentionally highlighting these skills through professional development may result in increasing administrators’ ability to communicate effectively, thereby improving the relationships with and satisfaction of staff (de Vries et al., 2010), which indirectly impacts children’s educational experiences. Staff who are happier provide better education to their children (Hur et al., 2016; Van der Vyer et al., 2014).
The ICCS was the highest scored by participants in the study (M=3.78, SD=.316). Early childhood administrators in this study believe they have a relatively good ability to communicate effectively while managing their interpersonal relationships (Rubin & Martin, 1994). While this measure did not have the reliability to use subscales of the measure, the use of the total scale is still useful to the study’s research questions. For example, the ability to reveal oneself to others through communication, self-disclosure, and expressiveness, communicating feelings through behavior, is closely related to relational transparency within the ALQ. These skills can be developed in administrators who then model and enhance these skills in their followers, an outcome of relational leadership (Fusco et al., 2015; Zinsser, Denham, Curby, & Chazen-Cohen, 2016).

Empathy, closely related and a part of social-awareness, is the ability to see another person’s perspective and is an important factor in communication and relational leadership (Ayoko et al., 2008). Additionally, altercentrism, the ability to attend to the verbal and nonverbal messages sent by others has also been associated with effective leadership practices (Barge & Hirokawa, 1984; Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Li et al., 2013). Targeted professional development, provided with embedded self-reflection and goal setting would benefit the leadership development of early childhood administrators (Talan et al., 2014).

Assessment of Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire (PLCQ)

The PLCQ was found to be a short and easy to complete tool to assess self-perception of whether early childhood administrators agree with six statements found to examine leadership communication with followers founded in six facets; (1) verbal and nonverbal communication; (2) communicative motivation; (3) communication quality;
(4) reduction of uncertainty; (5) shared meaning; and (6) openness of communication (Schneider et al., 2015). This measure was chosen for its focus on the interpersonal communication process, being central to leadership effectiveness (Barge & Hirokawa, 1989). Different from the ICCS, the PLCQ measure is embedded in the communicational aspects of leadership with a theoretical approach to interpersonal communication in organizations versus the individual’s interpersonal communication assessed within the ICCS.

Respondents perceive themselves as having some skill in the area of leadership communication ($M = 3.22$) but scored themselves lower than the ICCS. Perhaps this is due to the individual uniqueness of response rates or because the respondents wanted to respond in ways that are consistent with their perception of the right answer. For the purpose of this study, the self-perception of these skills was the intent. Providing targeted professional development to early childhood administrators in relational communication-oriented behaviors may provide more satisfied subordinates and therefore decrease turnover in programs (de Vries et al., 2010; Yukl et al., 2019).

The PLCQ measure may best be used in combination with the other rating as there is a difference in leaders’ perception of leadership communication and their followers (Erben et al., 2019). It has also been found that those who over or under-estimate their skills related to communication may negatively impact organizational outcomes (Yammarino & Atwater, 1993). Based on the findings of this study, administrators that work in accredited programs rated themselves lower on all measures than their peers in non-accredited (licensed or licensed plus) programs. The use of other ratings may shed light on this in future research. The findings of this study support the need to provide
professional development to early childhood administrators so they may build an accurate sense of self-perception (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992), thereby positively impacting their programs (Zinsser, Denham, Curby, & Chazen-Cohen, 2016).

An additional barrier to the measure was the inability to examine each of the specific facets separately as this could provide specific insight to individuals seeking to improve their skills. Supporting this limitation, this measure when used in conjunction with the others chosen provides insight into how early childhood administrators perceive their communication through their leadership.

Participant responses to the measures used had no significant relationship between administrator characteristics and the ALQ subscales, the ICC, and the PLCQ. This finding suggests that regardless of how educated, aged, or experienced an early childhood administrator may be, it did not influence the way in which the measures were scored. All individuals may benefit from professional development that is targeted toward relational leadership and communication competence skills to enhance the relationships they have with the teachers in their program for the advantage of increasing program quality. There was a similar finding by Bird and colleagues (2009), that no significant relationships were present in the ALQ and participant demographics.

The findings related to administrator characteristics and turnover suggest that program type and education level of administrators may influence turnover within programs. While there are numerous reasons for teacher turnover, benefits are unveiled when professional development is used as a vehicle for continued growth as an educator and as an administrator. The field is continuously changing and those in leadership roles would do well to stay abreast of current research, including specific relational
leadership and communication skills to be effective in their roles to minimize the likelihood that they may be causing teacher turnover. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) recommended that school leaders in K-12 be part of training programs designed to “build and nurture school settings that encourage teacher retention” (p. 34).

The finding that 56% of administrators taking at least one leadership training within the last 12 months is promising for the creation of professional development. Providing a focused leadership track would not only ensure early childhood administrators received the training needed to enhance their leadership but they may be motivated to partake if it were used to complete NH licensing requirements of 18 hours of professional development per year (NH Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of Child Care Licensing, 2017). Further, as the state of NH QRIS task force works to unveil its plan for quality rating, this information could serve as an important indicator of the type of training to be provided to early childhood administrators for program quality enhancement.

Limitations

This research study was not without limitations. As a first time researcher with limited knowledge of Qualtrics, the demographic questions were created to answer the research questions relative to various characteristics of administrators and programs. Some of the questions were not viable for analysis due to how they were asked. For example, questions inquiring to the number of teachers being supervised and the number of children served were asked. Without additional parameters in place, multiple assumptions could be made about this data and therefore could not be effectively used
in analyses conducted. Specifically, the number of teachers being supervised by administrators ranged from one to forty. The number of children served ranged from six to 425. It is not clear if these program administrators were single site or multi-site administrators, nor if they specifically were the actual on site supervisors of these teachers. Therefore, the questions related to program size were eliminated from analysis. Future research should target a question relative to small, medium, and large programs to enable a question for analysis related to program type other than what type of license they hold as there could be relationships between program size and turnover.

How questions are asked impacts not only the responses but the way that statistical analyses are run (Ravid, 2015). Additionally, while the length of a survey can be a deterrent to response rate (Ravid, 2015; Liu & Wronski, 2018), motivation and interest on the topic may also influence the response rate (Herzog & Bachman, 1981).

All the measures used were self-report instruments which may result in an inaccurate assessment of individuals (Yammarino & Atwater, 1993). Individuals who do not understand the constructs being measured may report themselves higher than their actual competency (Wang et al., 2016). However, this study sought to identify self-perception specifically as a foundation to build professional development. Self-report measures are most beneficial when perception is the outcome (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988), such as in this study.

It is recommended that future research consider both self and other rating assessments to assist administrators in comparing their perception of self and others’ view of them (Atwater et al., 1998). All of the measures chosen for this study include an other-rating that can be used (Rubin & Martin, 1994; Schneider et al., 2015; Walumbwa
et al., 2008). In addition, these measures may be used to determine relationships between leaders’ perceptions of themselves and others as well as other organizational aspects, like turnover intentions of teachers, and job satisfaction. Erben and colleagues (2019) found that leaders who have a self-perception and others’ ratings of high leadership communication have subordinates that are more satisfied at work. As in other studies of authenticity (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009), leaders may have responded in ways they thought they should instead of how they actually perform the skills, which supports the need for other ratings. Specifically, teachers trust their principals when they believe their principal is consistent in their expectations, enhancing their perception of authenticity (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009). Combining the self and other rating reports may provide an opportunity for further reflection of skills, goal creation, and targeted professional development for individuals (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). It might also suggest threads of constructs needing enhanced professional development for the field.

This study was focused on early childhood administrators in New Hampshire so the findings may not be useful to other states. However, across the country leadership qualifications are generally minimal for early childhood administrators so this study may influence existing training for this population. In addition, the targeted population in this study may not be generalizable to other fields. However, since the focus of this study is on relational leadership skills that have been identified by administrators, it could assist others who are interested in the impact of communication competence and relational leadership skills of leaders as they create professional development options.
This study sought to provide access to all of NH’s early childhood administrators regardless of licensed program type or size. Future research may consider varying samples from each type and size of program for the benefits that could be revealed related to the similarities and differences within center-based programs, which includes not only various ages of children but range from non-profit to for-profit and may also include specialized programs such as Head Start.

The impact due to the timing of the study in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic adds a significant barrier to the proposed outcome. An original desired sample was 25% of the targeted population of 421 programs or roughly 100 survey responses. The actual sample size of the population at the time of the study is unknown as programs either closed their doors or were open but not serving children during March 2020, the month in which the study commenced (M. Ilg, personal communication, June 14, 2020). Additionally, since the number of sites being supervised was not asked, it is likely that some of these administrators, reported as supervising large numbers of teachers, are multi-site administrators, overseeing many programs, impacting the number of programs included in the sample.

**Implications: Lessons Learned and Areas of Growth**

This study sought to identify relational leadership and communication competence skills early childhood administrators perceive they exhibit. Overall, early childhood administrators believe they exhibit moderate skills in communication competence and relational leadership. This finding suggests that these skills can be enhanced via the tools used in this study and targeted professional development. While there was no significance found between the ALQ subscales, the ICCS, and the PLCQ and
Administrator characteristics, there were significant differences between program type and education of administrators in relation to turnover. There is room for further discovery from teacher perspectives of why they left that might not be known by administrators themselves that could be explored in future studies, such as salary and benefits, program climate, and direct relationship with their administrator that are outside this study’s initial focus.

This research study has provided insight into the self-perception of early childhood administrators’ relational leadership and communication skills. The findings of this research may bring awareness to the early childhood profession through targeted professional development. The research findings provide a multitude of opportunities for professional development specific to administrators, an area that is not currently considered strategically in the state of NH. This includes course creation, workshops, and coaching. In addition, the social and intimate environments of early learning programs call for a more relational approach to leadership that this study could influence (Zinsser, Denham, Curby, & Chazan-Cohen, 2016). As a targeted approach to leadership preparation, policymakers, higher education institutions, and professional development creators can use this study’s findings to provide a direct connection to effective relational leadership through communication for early childhood administrators and other leaders.

**Future Research**

This research study was the first of its kind to explore the relational leadership and communication competence behaviors of early childhood administrators. The findings provide an important foundation for future research and implication in the field. Future
research should; (1) examine both the self and other rating measurements of the instruments used in this study for the purpose of more complete assessment, involving all stakeholders, (2) examine pre and post-test targeted professional development programs created around relational leadership and communication competence, (3) examine how these skills are developed over time, and (4) explore how these skills can become part of a targeted early childhood administrator preparation program.

The immediate next step is to create a mixed methods research study with pre and post-test analyses along with qualitative interviews or focus groups to gather insight about the impact that professional development had on self-perception of the targeted skills. This new study should include professional development to the administrators that focuses on the integration of knowledge, skills, and self-assessment through goal creation. The current study could also be replicated by other states with insight into improvements needed for effective questioning. Additional research is needed to expand the knowledge base of early childhood administrators in leadership specific categories for knowledge and skill development.

**Conclusion**

Early childhood administrators have an incredible impact on the programs they supervise, including teacher turnover. Authentic leadership and communication competence measures were used to establish a baseline of early childhood administrators’ perception of their skills in these areas as a foundation to determine targeted professional development to enhance relationships with their teachers within their programs. The benefits of positive relationships between teachers and
administrators have been identified as one reason for turnover (Cassidy et al., 2011; Hale-Jinks et al., 2006; Jeon & Wells, 2018; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

Administrators working in accredited programs were found to assess themselves lower on all measures than administrators working in licensed or licensed plus programs. Turnover was found to be significant with program type (p = .016) and education level (p = .046), and approaching significance with the number of years in their current programs (p = .054). This finding that administrators working in higher-quality programs, with higher levels of education and more years of service is an interesting finding not yet seen in the field of early childhood as most turnover studies look at the demographics of teachers themselves and not the administrators (Ingersoll, 2001; Jeon & Wells, 2018; Saluja et al., 2002). In summation, the novel findings related to this study provide early childhood administrators with insight into their self-perception of proven effective leadership skills and potential relationships between turnover and administrator characteristics. These findings highlight important aspects related to targeted professional development to ensure that all administrators have access to these critical skills and to emulate this with their own teams of teachers.
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Appendices
Appendix A

Plymouth State University IRB Approval

Dear Lisa Ranfor:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Plymouth State University, your project entitled “Examining Relational Leadership Skills in Early Childhood Administration” has been granted Expedited approval for one year, starting on February 5, 2020. Please be sure to submit your Final Report Form (or Renewal Form) when your research is complete and no later than February 5, 2021.

If, during the course of your project you intend to make changes that may significantly affect human subject involvement (particularly methodological changes), you must obtain IRB approval prior to implementing these changes. Any unanticipated problems related to your use of human subjects must be promptly reported to the IRB. The IRB may be contacted through Dr. Claudio M. Utley, Vice-Chair of the IRB. This is required so that the IRB can update or revise protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary.

You are expected to maintain as an essential part of your project records, any records pertaining to the use of human as subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to and received from the subjects as well as any executed forms, data and analysis results. If this is a funded project (federal, state, private, other organization), you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representatives of the University, State of New Hampshire, and/or the federal government.

Please note that IRB approval cannot exceed one year. If you expect your project to continue beyond this approval period, you must submit a request for continuance to the IRB for renewal of IRB approval. IRB approval must be obtained and maintained for the entire term of your project or award.

Please notify the IRB in writing when the project is completed. We may ask that you provide information regarding your experiences with human subjects and with the IRB review process. Upon notification we will close your files pertaining to your project. Any subsequent reactivation of the project will require a new IRB application. I have attached the Project Completion Form for your convenience.

Please do not hesitate to contact the IRB if you have any questions or require assistance. We will be happy to assist you in any way we can. Thank you for your cooperation and efforts throughout this review process. We wish you success in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Claudio M. Utley, PhD, Vice-Chair
Institutional Review Board
Appendix B

Cover Letter

Dear Early Childhood Director

I am writing today to request your assistance with a research study I am conducting in the state of NH early childhood program administrators.

The proposed research seeks to identify characteristics of early childhood administrators in New Hampshire to understand the types of qualities exhibited by these leaders. This knowledge may uncover targeted professional development in leadership to enhance the quality of early childhood education programs.

To do this, I am asking all directors in the state to take part in a self-report survey answering questions anonymously, openly and honestly in areas of leadership skills and communication competence with their staff members in an effort to focus on the relational leadership aspect of their work. Trends will arise related to what directors already know and what could be enhanced through targeted professional development specific to supporting leadership of teachers.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out at any time at lisaranfos@comcast.net or 603-731-0449.

I thank you in advance for your assistance and personal insight.

Warmly,

Lisa Ranfos
Appendix C
Consent Letter

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

RESEARCHER AND TITLE OF STUDY

Lisa Ranfos, doctoral candidate at Plymouth State University has invited you to participate in the study, *Examining relational leadership skills of early childhood administrators*.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This consent form describes the research study and helps you to decide if you want to participate. It provides important information about what you will be asked to do in the study, about the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and about your rights as a research participant. You should:

- Read the information in this document carefully, and ask me any questions, particularly if you do not understand something.
- Not agree to participate until all your questions have been answered, or until you are sure that you want to.
- Understand that your participation in this study involves you to fill out an online survey that will last about 20 minutes.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The study *Examining relational leadership skills of early childhood administrators* seeks to identify characteristics of early childhood administrators in New Hampshire to understand the types of qualities exhibited by these leaders. This knowledge may
uncover targeted professional development in leadership to enhance the quality of early childhood education programs. Self-identified perception of constructs related to leadership practices and communication competence will be reported by directors in early childhood programs to build a foundation of knowledge and skills specifically of leaders in the state of NH. All directors meeting the requirements for the study are invited to participate. Directors must be at least 21 years of age to participate in the study.

WHAT DOES YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY INVOLVE?

*Participation in this study will require approximately 20 to 30 minutes of uninterrupted time to complete an online survey. The questions will focus on your self-identified perception of your leadership skills and communication competence within your early childhood program.*

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in this study is expected to present minimal risk to you, as each survey will be completed anonymously. It is possible that some participants might feel some discomfort related to some of the statements that are asked related to their leadership style. In addition, as program type will be included there is a potential for relationships to be identified related to specific competencies exhibited from individuals and their program type. Lastly, there is also a minimal risk of breach of confidentiality; however, steps have been taken to reduce this risk.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?
While there are no direct benefits of participating in this study for you, an increased understanding of leadership competencies for individuals leading early childhood programs may be useful. Further, professional development training in this area may also be developed for the purpose of enhancing the findings as relevant, which is an area that is underserved currently in the state of NH.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree to participate in this study, there will not be any monetary incentive. However, all reports and findings will be shared with participants.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer any question. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way.

CAN YOU WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

If you agree to participate in this study and you then change your mind, you may stop participating at any time. Any data collected as part of your participation will remain part of the study records.

HOW WILL THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF YOUR RECORDS BE PROTECTED?

The researcher plans to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research by keeping it stored on an encrypted thumb drive in a locked safe in the researcher’s home office.
You should understand that any form of communication over the Internet presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality. However, to help protect the confidentiality of your information, the following protocols have been put in place. First, all questionnaires and reports will be identified with a unique participant ID number, rather than your name, and will be stored in a locked safe in the researcher’s home office. Second, IP addresses will not be collected from online surveys and all information will be stored on Qualtrics, a secure platform that is password protected. Information obtained in this study will be reported in research reports, presentations, and publications in aggregate (i.e., group) form; no names or other identifying information will be used in any report or presentation.

WHOM TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY

If you have any questions pertaining to the research, you can contact Lisa Ranfos at (603)731-0449 or lisaranfos@comcast.net to discuss them.

If you consent to participate in this study, please click on the “I Consent” tab and you will be taken to the online survey to begin.

If you do not wish to consent to participate, please click on “I do not consent” and you will be redirected out of the online survey portion of the study.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this study in the state of NH to address the importance of the role that early childhood administrator’s play in their programs, thereby supporting teaching staff as they provide best practice to children, improving their developmental outcomes.
Appendix D

Demographic Survey

Age (text box)

Gender

- Female
- Male
- Other (text box)

Race

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- From multiple races
- Other (text box)

Highest level of school you have completed or highest degree you have received

- High school degree or equivalent
- Some college but no degree
  - How many credits have you received (text box)
- Associate degree
  - What discipline (text box)
- Bachelor degree
  - What discipline (text box)
- Graduate degree
  - What discipline (text box)

Type of early childhood program

- Licensed
- Licensed plus
- Accredited
  - By NAEYC (check box)
  - By other (check box)

Program location – (provide map for ease of location by town)

- Rockingham county
- Hillsborough county
• Coos county
• Belknap county
• Strafford county
• Grafton county
• Merrimack county
• Carroll county
• Sullivan county
• Cheshire county

Years worked in the field of early childhood education in a child care program

• Less than 1 year
• 1-3 years
• 3-5 years
• 5-7 years
• 7-10 years
• Over ten years (text box for # of years)

How long have you been the director in your current program?

• Less than 1 year
• 1-3 years
• 3-5 years
• 5-7 years
• 7-10 years
• Over ten years (text box for # of years)

Were you a teacher in your current program prior to becoming the director?

• Yes or no check box

Have you received specific leadership training for your role as director (including all previous director roles you have held)

• Yes or No

If yes, what type of training did you receive

• Pre-service (prior to being in role)
• In service (after being hired in role)

In what form did this training occur (check all that apply)

• Online webinar or training
• College courses for credit
• Workshop sessions
• Leadership conferences
• Early childhood conferences with leadership track
• Child Care Aware leadership sessions
• Other (text box)

In the last 12 months have you taken any leadership specific training from any of the following

• Online webinar or training
• College courses for credit
• Workshop sessions
• Leadership conferences
• Early childhood conferences with leadership track
• Child Care Aware leadership sessions
• Other (text box)

In the last 12 months have you experienced teacher turnover within your program

• Yes or no
• If yes,
  o Number of teachers (text box)
• Reason for leaving (if known) – check all that apply
  o Another position in the public school system
  o Another position at a different childcare program
  o Offered a promotion within current program
  o Retired
  o Was dismissed unwillingly
  o Unknown
Appendix E

Authentic Leadership Questionnaire

Lisa Rantos

Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ Version 1.0 Self)

Bruce J. Avolio, Ph.D.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Organization ID #: ___________________________ Person ID #: ___________________________

Instructions: The following survey items refer to your leadership style, as you perceive it. Please judge how frequently each statement fits your leadership style using the following scale:

Not at all     Once in a while     Sometimes     Fairly often     Frequently, if not always
              0                        1                        2                        3                        4

As a leader I...

1. say exactly what I mean 0 1 2 3 4
2. admit mistakes when they are made 0 1 2 3 4
3. encourage everyone to speak their mind 0 1 2 3 4
4. tell you the hard truth 0 1 2 3 4
5. display emotions exactly in line with feelings 0 1 2 3 4
6. demonstrate beliefs that are consistent with actions 0 1 2 3 4
7. make decisions based on my core values 0 1 2 3 4
8. ask you to take positions that support your core values 0 1 2 3 4
9. make difficult decisions based on high standards of ethical conduct 0 1 2 3 4
10. solicit views that challenge my deeply held positions 0 1 2 3 4
11. analyze relevant data before coming to a decision 0 1 2 3 4
12. listen carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions 0 1 2 3 4
13. seek feedback to improve interactions with others 0 1 2 3 4
14. accurately describe how others view my capabilities 0 1 2 3 4
15. know when it is time to reevaluate my position on important issues 0 1 2 3 4
16. show I understand how specific actions impact others 0 1 2 3 4

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Appendix F

Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale

Interpersonal communication competence scale

(overall alpha on 30 item scale = .86)

Here are some statements about how people interact with other people. For each statement, circle the responses that best reflects YOUR communication with others. Be honest in your responses an reflect on your communication behavior very carefully.

If you ALMOST ALWAYS interact this way, circle the 5
If you communicate this way OFTEN, circle the 4
If you behave this way SOMETIMES, circle the 3
If you act this way only SELDOM, circle the 2
If you ALOST NEVER behave this way, circle the 1

Self Disclosure

I allow friends to see who I really am

1 2 3 4 5

Other people know what I am thinking

1 2 3 4 5

I reveal how I feel to others

1 2 3 4 5

Empathy

I can put myself on others’ shoes

1 2 3 4 5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know exactly what others are feeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other people think I understand them</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Relaxation</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am comfortable in social situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel relaxed in small group gatherings</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel insecure in groups of strangers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I’ve been wronged, I confront the person who wronged me</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have trouble standing up for myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>I stand up for my rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Altercentrism</td>
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<tr>
<td>My conversations are pretty one sided</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I let others know that I understand what they say</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My mind wanders during conversations</td>
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</table>
Interaction management

My conversations are characterized by smooth shifts from one topic to the next

1  2  3  4  5

I take charge of conversations I’m in by negotiating what topics we talk about

1  2  3  4  5

In conversations with friends, I perceive not only what they say but what they don’t say

1  2  3  4  5

Expressiveness

My friends can tell when I’s happy or sad

1  2  3  4  5

It’s difficult to find the right words to express myself

1  2  3  4  5

I express myself well verbally

1  2  3  4  5

Supportiveness

My communication us usually descriptive, not evaluative

1  2  3  4  5

I communicate with others as though they’re equals

1  2  3  4  5

Others would describe me as warm

1  2  3  4  5
Immediacy

My friends truly believe that I care about them 1 2 3 4 5
I try to look others in the eye when I speak with them 1 2 3 4 5
I tell people when I feel close to them 1 2 3 4 5

Environmental control

I accomplish my communication goals 1 2 3 4 5
I can persuade others to my position 1 2 3 4 5
I have trouble convincing others to do what I want them to do 1 2 3 4 5
Appendix G

Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire

Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire: Schneider, Maier, Lovrekovic, and Retzbach (2015)

Please respond to the following items on a five point scale.

0= completely disagree
1= somewhat disagree
2= neither agree or disagree
3= somewhat agree
4= completely agree

I am sensitive to the needs of others

I like devoting my time to my coworkers

I am content with the way my communication with my coworkers is going

My coworkers and I share an understanding of how we would like to achieve our goals

My coworkers and I speak openly with one another

Especially when problems arise, we talk to one another even more intensively in order to resolve the problem